

MENTORING AFRICAN AMERICAN TEENAGE BOYS UTILIZING A
CHRISTIAN BASED MODEL

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ABSTRACT

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A Christian mentoring program was developed for fifteen African American boys ages thirteen to nineteen in the Brentwood neighborhood of Washington, District of Columbia. The Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church collaborated with faculty from Howard University School of Divinity, Alfred A. Owens, Jr. Community Family Life Center, and judicial and law enforcement entities in Washington, D.C. to conduct the program. Four two hour Biblically based instructional sessions were conducted teaching Christian moral and ethical principles related to God and heaven, respect for others, respect for parents and authority, and honesty. A qualitative research method was used. A pre and post test survey was administered to measure the effectiveness of the program. The results demonstrated that the participants developed positive attitudinal changes in the way they perceived God and heaven, and respected others, including parents and authority. The data showed that their attitudes regarding honesty remained positively high.

INTRODUCTION

Many of the teenage boys in the Brentwood neighborhood of Washington, District of Columbia (also known as Washington, D.C.) live in single family homes, often headed by women. There are very few positive role models in their lives and they are easily lured to the lifestyles lived in gangs and crews. They often learn and act out negative behavior at early ages. It is not uncommon for many of these teenage boys in this neighborhood to have had several encounters with the judicial system and in their Junior High or Senior High School. Dropout rates are far too high, rising above fifty percent, and imperiling future development.¹ Many of these boys lack the social and communicative skills to forge positive relationships outside of their own neighborhood or circle of friends. From a Christian perspective, many come from homes where their parents do not attend a church and very little Christian moral or ethical training is accorded. This plays out in numerous unconstructive ways and sometime lead to violent consequences when attempts are made to resolve their disputes through violence. Although the Brentwood area is undergoing rapid urban revitalization and changes in the racial and ethnic makeup, these teenage boys are largely African American.

The basic challenge is in establishing effective methods of bringing about attitudinal changes. The hypothesis of this ministry project proposed a Christian based mentoring program for African American teenage boys in the Brentwood neighborhood

¹ Michael Bimbaum, "D.C. Graduation Rate Down," *The Washington Post*, June 9, 2009.

of Washington, D.C. to teach certain Christian moral and ethical values to cause attitudinal changes in its participants. The specific moral and ethical values taught to the teenage boys in this Christian mentoring program focused on God and heaven, respect for others, respect for parents and authority, and honesty. The context for this project is the Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church (GMCHC). Although GMCHC is the epicenter of this collaboration, it involves select faculty from Howard University School of Divinity, the Alfred A. Owens, Jr. Family Life Center, parents of the teenage boys in the mentoring program, and representatives from the judicial and law enforcement entities of Washington, D.C. By developing this collaborative model, the Church can more plainly comprehend the force it has in bringing various entities together to impact community concerns. From the perspective of the Academy, this model affords an opportunity to study the impact on communities when diverse entities, with seemingly competing agendas, work together to solve community concerns they may have approached individually. The Academy as defined for this missive includes accredited academic schools of Divinity.

In Chapter One the researcher explores his spiritual journey that led to the undertaking of this project. The chapter also reviews the ministry context, GMCHC, and its impact on the surrounding community. The reader will increase their understanding and appreciation for the scope of this project and why it matters to the researcher and the Academy. Chapter Two is a dialogue with and around the state of the art literature as it relates to this project. It will help the reader to understand current thoughts and trends about the nature and extent of this problem as well as the various views about effective mentoring of African American teenage boys.

Chapter Three will give the reader an in-depth look at the historical foundation of the involvement of the Church in mentoring young boys. This chapter will discuss the impact and role of mentoring from the perspective of Scripture passages found in both the Old Testament and New Testament. It will explore the theological underpinning of mentoring as it relates to *community* and *relationship*. Chapter Four describes the methodology and research design chosen to measure the reaction of the participants to the educational materials. By utilizing focus groups, interviews, pre and post-tests research data, a clearer picture emerges about the impact of a Christian based mentoring program on the attitudinal changes of these teenage boys. Chapter Five provides a detailed analysis and result of the data collected and offers an interpretation of the analysis. This information can be replicated by leaders in other local churches similarly situated. Chapter Six is a summary. It also provides a reflection on this project. It covers some of the highs and lows encountered and outline some recommended changes or modification based on lessons learned. The researcher shares his thoughts about the role faith communities should play in fostering collaborative models for addressing a plethora of community issues and in extending the concept of *community* beyond the walls of the local church buildings.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The ministry focus of this project addresses the establishment of a Christian based mentoring program for young African American boys between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, in the Brentwood neighborhood of Washington District of Columbia (also known as Washington, D.C. The mentoring program was designed to teach certain Christian moral and ethical principles to provide a theological framework for making decisions. The specific moral and ethical values taught to the teenage boys in this Christian mentoring program focused on God and heaven, respect for others, respect for parents and authority, and valuing property. The scope of this ministry project is not long enough to monitor, track and record resulting behavioral change. However, this ministry project is precursory to an effort by this writer's context, Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church (GMCHC), to reach out to and mentor young boys in the surrounding neighborhood.

This writer is an Elder at GMCHC and is Co-Chair of the Ministerial Alliance comprised of one hundred and forty two Elders, Evangelists and Ministers. Teaching Christian moral and ethical principles to young urban African American teenage boys will equip them with a framework for better decision making. Over time it is expected to reduce negative behavior giving rise to problems such as unacceptable High School

dropout rates, high crime rates and violence, as well as reduce teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS infections.

MINISTRY COLLABORATION

This ministry project was a collaborative effort between GMCHC, select faculty from Howard University School of Divinity (HUSD), the Alfred A. Owens, Jr. Community Family Life Center, parents of the teenage boys in the ministry project, and representatives from the judicial and law enforcement entities of Washington, D.C. GMCHC has strong connections to the Brentwood community, HUSD and the Alfred A. Owens, Jr. Community Family Life Center. All are located in Ward Five of the City. Many members of GMCHC's Ministerial Alliance earned their Masters of Divinity (MDIV) and/or Doctorate of Ministry (D.Min) degrees from HUSD. GMCHC's innovative efforts in the area of HIV/AIDS counseling and education, and testing, have received positive accolades from city officials and other service providers such as the Walt Whitman clinic. Its alcohol and drug abuse program, food and clothing banks, job bank, family life center, homeless ministry, and legal clinic, are connected to a network of community, City, and National service providers which collaborate to provide services and empowerment efforts to citizens across the city.

There is an internal mentoring program at GMCHC which provides mentoring and teaching experiences to young teenage boys who attend the church. However, this ministry project is an exploration in providing mentoring opportunities to boys in the neighborhood who are not affiliated with GMCHC and in some case, not affiliated with any church. In this ministry project, several mentors met weekly with a group of fifteen

teenage boys, for a period of five weeks to teach them certain Christian moral and ethical principles and provide positive examples for them to emulate. Representatives from the Law Enforcement and Judicial entities of Washington, D.C. also briefed and provided information to the teenagers on their roles and responsibilities. Prior to the session, a pre test was administered to ascertain their attitudes when considering certain Christian values and principles. The same test was administered after the training sessions to determine attitudinal changes. The resulting data were analyzed on a comparative basis, resulting in the findings outline in Chapter Five of this project.

SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

This writer grew up in an environment which had strong emphasis on family and the idea that each generation would become better than the preceding one. This idea was stated no more poignantly than by Nettie Lee Holston, the matriarch of the family who would often say to her children *“working in the cotton fields of Georgia ought to make anyone want to go to college.”* She was born into a family of sharecroppers, on April 25, 1910, in Reynolds, Georgia as the second youngest of nineteen siblings. She would not have the opportunities she sought for her children. Joseph Holston, the son of a sharecropper from a farm several miles down the road would eventually marry Nettie Lee (Hicks) Holston and to this union would be born eleven children. This writer was the youngest of all the siblings.

Early spiritual formation began at Bethel Temple Holiness Church in Reynolds, Georgia. Although Nettie Lee was only able to complete an eighth grade education, she was an avid reader and in the Pentecostal Assembly of The World (PAW) denomination, became one of the early women pastors who eventually took over the pastorate of the Bethel Temple Holiness

Church in Reynolds, Georgia. She would have the single largest impact in the spiritual and cultural development of her children and many other children in the community. Growing up in the Pentecostal denomination in the fifties and sixties was not easy for a young boy. Jokes were constant and nicknames like “Holy Roller” were often used to describe the method of worship chosen by those in the tradition.

Though food was always provided in the house, it did not come easy. Nettie Lee often told her siblings about the many times they had to lure the owner’s pigs under their house and pull them up through a cut away in the floor so they could have enough food for everyone to eat. The work was hard and more often than not, there was no money left at the end of the planting season after paying all the bills. Joseph, like many of the men in Reynolds, was a heavy whisky drinker, particularly on the weekends after farming all week. Although Nettie Lee never allowed alcohol in the house, the smell was always present with Joseph and frequently bottles of his corn liquor or *moonshine* would be found around the outside of the house or in the woods behind the house. In later years, Nettie Lee would convince Joseph to move his family off the farm into the Town of Reynolds where he would take on a job managing a convenient store for one of the local African Americans. In 1959, Joseph would die from the complications caused by alcohol. This writer was nine years old when Joseph died and caused him to engage in search of a father figure or a mentor he so desperately sought in Joseph. Out of this lack of a father figure, grew a passion for mentoring young teenage boys who have no father.

Like many Southern towns during the fifties and the sixties, the socio-economic landscape was painted with the complicated pattern of discrimination based on race and color. Although there were very few *white only* or *colored only* signs in Reynolds, there was an engrained understanding of the way life was to be governed between the races. The paradoxical

landscape of race in Reynolds was filled with complexities. From early memories many African American youth frequently played and socialized with some of their white counterparts in the community. Around the age of twelve, as if brought on by the waving of some magical wand, separation based on race and color instantly sprung forth as a perfect storm. All traces of those previous relationships were destroyed. There were no ceremonies or coronations to mark the event. There were no spoken words of understanding or even sadness in the parting of friends. Everyone involved just knew it was time to mark the occasion. The separation was then quietly woven into the fabric of the lives of African American and white youth in Reynolds with words echoed by older whites in the community. These words which ricochet across the socio-economic landscape simply said “*It is time to start calling Johnny, Mister Johnny.*” Or, “*it is time to call Blanche, Miss Blanche.*” With these words, both white and African American kids went their separate ways, forgetting the times they had laughed, played, and even fought together. Like a bad scene from an old Civil War movie where brothers on opposing sides come face to face in combat, African American and white kids in Reynolds who knew each other intimately, trained their mental guns on each other without remorse.

Although, the circumstances are different, the ministry project focuses on young teenage boys in the Brentwood neighborhood, many who have no living father or no father living in the home. Many seek mentors or *familial* in the wrong places. Many of these young boys are ostracized by society at large, relegating them to being *outcasts* without hope of reformation. They are frequently branded as hopeless and as no good by the media, and in many instances, by churches. As a result, many wash their hands without ever stretching out their hand to help provide positive mentoring relationships, especially Christian mentoring relationships. The idea of this ministry project is to provide viable Christian examples who will teach Christian moral

and ethical values, forming relationships which will provide role models and provide an opportunity for them to earn a chance at living a wholesome life and becoming contributors to their society. The specific moral and ethical values taught to the teenage boys in this Christian mentoring program focused on God and heaven, respect for others, respect for parents and authority, and valuing property.

What served as an antidote to the many negative environmental pressures growing up in Reynolds could also serve the boys who are a part of this ministry project. Reynolds was a community grounded strongly in Christian beliefs and values. The notion of helping youth become successful and serve as examples for them was integrated in the fabric of the community. The church played a critical role in almost everything which was done in the community. The idea of church meant community leadership. The church was the hub for spiritual renewal and moral and ethical teachings. It was the place for civic and cultural engagements. Youth learned public speaking, acted in drama and comedy plays, recited poetry, were taught to sing, conducted prayer meetings and business meetings, and did mission and volunteered. They engaged in many educational and social activities in the church. Most all the churches in Reynolds had a number of parishioners who were active in the community and focused their efforts on mentoring neighborhood youth, particularly African American boys. The community also expected excellence from the youth even though their own lives had been cut short of their dreams. In a sense, “The community looked after its young in a variety of ways.”¹ Many times this writer would be stopped by adults in his community as well as church parishioners inquiring how he was doing in school. They always offered encouraging words,

¹ John D’emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Time of Bayard Rustin*, (Chicago; The University of Chicago Press 2003), 26.

sometimes whispering words like, “*that boy of Nettie Lee’s gonna be somebody.*” The autobiography of Howard Thurman, *With Head And Heart*, was a stark reminder of the times adults Reynolds would stop this writer and ask him to recite a poem or read a reading from Paul Lawrence Dunbar or James Weldon Johnson. One favorite of an older sibling was by an unknown author, which was also cited by the author Howard Thurman in his book *With Head and Heart*.²

The poem captures the essence of the desire of the African American community of Reynolds to mentor their youth in a way which fostered the daring spirit to succeed:

I am tired of sailing my little boat
 Far inside the harbor bar-
 I want to go out where the big ships float
 Out on the deep where the great ones are
 And should my frail craft prove too slight
 For waves that seep those billows o’er [over],
 I’d [I would] rather go down in the stirring fight
 Than drowse to death by the sheltered shore³

The Arts and the Humanities were considered a gift to help those in the African American community navigate the struggles of the time and the society which had branded them as nobodies. Childhood was filled with stories of unsung heroes, both men and women who stood up to a system which was determined to break them. Before Malcolm X’s (aka Malcolm Little) father lost his life in another place, he and his brothers struggled for equality in their hometown of Reynolds, Georgia. These men and women of courage provided strong positive

² Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace and Company 1979), 54.

³ Ibid.

examples for the youth in the community, establishing in them a mindset to never allow their environment (regardless of how negative) or stereotyped images of them, determine the type of person they became. The positive role models helped the youth in Reynolds navigate the terrain of bad experiences. The Christian moral and ethical teachings which permeated the community played a vital role in the spiritual formation of each youth. By establishing a Christian mentoring program with positive role models to serve as examples, the teenage boys in the Brentwood neighborhood of Washington, D.C. will have a Christian standard by which they can make valued life choices and rise above a society which has often ostracized them and relegated them to a life of crime and poverty. Christian moral and ethical values, when taught by people who themselves served as examples, form powerful lessons and guideposts for attitudinal change.

Elementary school for this writer began at the age of five. Elementary school was filled with the author participating in the glee club, the drama club, the boy scouts, and many other activities. There were many trips to other Elementary schools throughout Georgia to participate in what was known as the Fine Arts Festivals. By then, Nettie Lee had gotten a job in the cafeteria cooking food for the kids at Reynolds Elementary. Nevertheless, elementary school was an enjoyable experience and this writer graduated at the head of the eight grade class. High School was a continuation of his participation in the Arts and Humanities. This writer participated in competition throughout the State of Georgia in High School Fine Arts Festivals and would eventually win a first place trophy two years in a row for R.L. McDougald High School in Oratory and be voted best Actors in drama in the State of Georgia. This writer graduated from High School as the salutatory and because he had the highest SAT scores among all County students, he was offered a full scholarship to several schools. This writer, however,

chose to go to Fort Valley State University in Georgia which was only about ten miles from his home.

ADULT TRANSITION

Adulthood started quickly for this writer upon arriving at Fort Valley State University as a freshman in 1967. There was unfettered freedom. No curfew and no one to report to made life fun. Although academics came easy during the freshman year, college fraternity life and other interest caused a shift from academics. Notwithstanding the intense social life, he met his wife, the former Miss JoAnn Calloway at a dance in the gym at the Fort Valley State University in October 1968. A popular, but relatively unknown band from Tuskegee Institute provided the music for the event. Little did any of us know at the time the musical group would later go on to become the popular and world renowned group who would call themselves *The Commodores*. He and JoAnn dated throughout their sophomore and junior years at college and were even voted as Couple of The Year in the College Yearbook. They married in 1970 in Newark, New Jersey. From 1969 to 1986, this writer did not attend Church nor thought of himself as being very spiritual. He had left the organized Church for good. Yet, he believed and acted on many of the tenets of the faith of his youth. JoAnn had acknowledged Jesus Christ as her savior through the ministry of Nettie Lee Holston. In a sense, when they married, both were heading in opposite directions.

In terms of bad memories, there were several key ones. The most notable ones included the death of Joseph Holston in 1959 and the death of Holston in 1985. In terms of his mother, the writer was devastated by the fact he lived in California at the time and was not with her when she died. In terms of Joseph's death, there had been very few fun memories established with him. There were no fishing trips to talk about. No long talks to remember and no examples to draw on

to help navigate life's terrains. When Joseph died, this writer turned to one of his older brothers, Willie Owen Holston to be a father image. Those were great moments. To just walk with him as an older brother was a very special occasion for this writer. Then as suddenly as it came, it left. Willie Owen was killed in a major car accident in 1962. Going forward, many people tried to fill in as a father figure, including this writer's oldest brother, David, but none could quite fill the void which had been created. The lack of an active father figure and role model is one of the primary reasons there is a strong passion for this mentoring project for helping fill the void in the life of these boys.

REFLECTION AND FORMATION OF THE IDEA OF COMMUNITY

Nettie Lee Holston transformed and expanded the boundaries of the Bethel Temple Holiness Church to include a larger definition of community. To her the community extended way beyond the boundaries of the church and those members in it. She believed the church should be a "light" which not only shines, but one which serves its community. As a young child, this writer traveled all over the county with Nettie Lee as she carried food, clothing, and other items to those in need. She carried people to the doctor's office, to church, to register to vote, to buy food, and sometimes to bury their own. She took in kids from the community to live with her for periods of time and she always taught them Christian values and moral principles. In reflection, these experiences helped to shape the passion for serving as a mentor and for helping to establish collaborative efforts to help positively shape the lives of young teenager, especially boys. It has also helped to shape a belief in which we must all begin "making the most of the

time, because the days are evil.”⁴ Some of the institutional structures and societal ills continue to wreak havoc on people in society, and it is a concurrent responsibility of every Christian to be sensitive to and engage in actions to improve the conditions of society for all humanity. There is an equally abiding disdain and disappointment for those Christians in ministry who do not believe social justice issues should be an integral part of the mission of the Church. An even greater sense of disdain and disappointment resides for those who believe in social justice issues but do nothing about them.

Although the idea of community was deeply engrained and many of the Christian teachings were adhered to, the return to formal ministry did not occur until 1986, brought on by a traumatic experience which happened in California. After spending hours with friends at a local pub in San Pedro, California, the drive home to Huntington Beach commenced. The trip was cut short on the Vincent Thomas Bridge going into Long Beach. It involved an accident which could have taken this writer's life. Instead, he was only rendered unconscious and sustained moderate injuries. After being released from the hospital in Long Beach and arriving home, the voice of God clearly said, “This day I put before you life and death,” and this writer said “I choose life.” This event gave genesis to a new commitment to work through the Church and forged a deeper involvement in the issues related to social justice and mentoring of youth. The journey from being outside of the church to becoming actively involved in the community through the church was a long and tumultuous journey filled with much soul searching. Efforts included working through local community organizations, such as serving as a mentor and member of the Board of Director of the *Breaking The Chain Foundation*, which provides mentors and other meaningful

⁴ Ephesians 5:16, The New Interpreter's Study Bible, NRSV (Nashville, TN: Abington Press), 2003.

experiences for at risk youth who have one or both parents incarcerated. The ministry work also included working in a non-profit organization established by JoAnn Holston to conduct youth revivals and workshops, and distribute book-bags and school supplies to needy youth primarily in Georgia and Virginia. Over the last five years, this non-profit has distributed book bags and school supplies to over five thousand youth, and over four hundred youth have dedicated their lives to Christ as a result of the Revivals. Working through the Homeless Ministry at Greater Mount Calvary, this writer engaged in ministry work to effectively transition homeless people to productive lives.

CONTEXT AND SYNERGY

The journey back to ministry began in a small church in Centreville, Virginia after moving back in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area from California in 1986. The Tree of Life Bible Church provided an opportunity to work in all aspect of church ministry, serving as an active deacon, trustee board member, Sunday school teacher; and chair of the scholarship fund, outreach ministry and building fund committee. In 1995 a move to Atlanta, Georgia became necessary because of change in employers.

Upon returning back into the Washington, D.C. area in 1999, Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church became the church of choice. At GMCHC this writer began to understand how ministry should impact the surrounding community. The work being done through GMCHC ministries such as the Homeless Ministry, HIV/AIDS ministry, and Calvary's Alternative to Alcohol, Drug Abuse (CATADA House), constituted a significant effort to be a light to and minister to the needs and concerns of the community. At GMCHC, the Alfred A. Owens, Jr. Community Family Life Center, the church's clothing and food banks, and job bank, were integrated into a network of local and national service providers to help empower the

community. Through the teaching, tutorship and *example* of the Senior Pastor, Bishop Alfred A. Owens, Jr., this writer came full circle with the Christian values and ethical principles learned from Nettie Lee Holston and members of the Christian community in Reynolds, Georgia. GMCHC was the church which one could work in and through to bring structure to the burning passion to establish a Christian mentoring program for neighborhood teenage boys. This writer was ordained as an Elder at Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church on May 19, 2003. Bishop Owens appointed him as Chair of the Lay Ministers Board in 2004 and later as Co-Chair of the Member Ministerial Alliance in 2006. Bishop Owens also appointed this writer to serve as the church's liaison with a mentoring group called *Breaking The Chain Foundation*. Its mission was to provide mentoring experiences for at risk youth who had one or two parents incarcerated. Several Elders, Evangelists and Ministers joined the team to assist in mentoring. After working with this Foundation and serving on the Board of Directors for several years, the passion grew to launch a mentoring program under the auspices of GMCHC which would focus on young teenage boys in the Brentwood neighborhood and in Ward Five where GMCHC was located. This passion gave birth to the idea for this ministry project. The United Theological Seminary provided the structure and focus to launch the program and form collaborative partnerships to ensure its longevity.

Several Ministry Nuances have evolved over time, but two are central. The first is a belief in which one must have a strong sense of integrity if one is to be able to successfully navigate the courses of this world, have impact through ministry, and serve as an example for others. In mentoring urban teenage boys, this is critical. Many times they are critical of the church and the Christian experience, yet it is to the church they look for distinct and tangible differences in action and deed. They look for demonstrated acts which tie Christians to their

belief. These examples serve as lessons for teenage boys which form powerful images when combined with what is taught. These examples, however, must be embodied by a strong sense of integrity. Stephen L. Carter in his Book *Integrity* outlines a simple, but effective three step methodology for managing integrity. In his book, Stephen Carter says integrity requires three steps: (1) *discerning* what is right and what is wrong; (2) *acting* on what you have discerned, even at personal cost; and (3) *saying openly* that you are acting on your understanding of what is right from wrong.⁵ The second nuance is ministry, especially mentoring young boys, must be bound by an understanding of the power of words. This is not necessarily focused exclusively on the Word of God as recorded in the Scriptures, but they are included. It focuses on the way we use our words, regardless of their origin. Subtle language which stereotype or type cast can cause barriers to be established which will prevent effective ministry. The media and other entities have used words which have labeled all these teenage boys the same – negative. As a result, they no longer trust the words of those who claim they want to help them. This Christian mentoring project is design to always reaffirm the positive aspect of the youth. One of the key tenants of the teachings is to respect the individual and understand the power of one's words. Don Miguel Ruiz, in his book *The Four Agreements*, speaks of the power of our words by saying: The word is not just a sound or a written symbol. The word is a force; it is the power you have to express and communicate, to think, and thereby to create the events in your life. The word is the most powerful tool you have as a human...But like a sword with two edges, your word can create the most beautiful dream, or your word can destroy everything around you.⁶

⁵ Stephen Carter, *Integrity* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1997), 7.

⁶ Don Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements – Wisdom Book* (San Rafael, CA: Amber-Allen Publishing), 30.

As a result of these principles and other views, this writer's ministry model is highly focused on involvement in the community and on addressing social justice issues. There is an emphasis on mentoring youths, especially young teenage boys, who have no positive adult role models in their lives. In this regard, this writer believes that ministry leaders must have a strong sense of integrity and a sense of credibility embedded in and expressed through meaningful words. The urgency which drives this writer to accomplish this ministry project is the view that the powerful forces create conditions which wreak havoc on many people, especially youth who live on the margins of society. It is those people on the margins of society who are in critical need of understanding the saving and revolutionary power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, the application of the Scriptures in the Bible must include a liberating theology which, as Miguel A. De La Torre would call *Reading the Bible from the Margins*.⁷ In his book, Miguel sets forth the premise in which one must also have these objectives in mind regarding modern society when the Bible is read: "First, to read the Bible from the perspective of those suffering... Second, to investigate biblical protest narratives to reveal models of resistance and struggle... Finally, to examine various biblical interpretations that are used as a source for liberation and for overcoming dominant power structures."⁸

SIGNIFICANCE TO THE ACADEMIC DIVINITY SCHOOLS

There are several reasons why this ministry project is significance to the Academy. First, it adds to and expands the literature regarding the types of Christian collaborative models which

⁷ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Reading the Bible from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 10.

⁸ Ibid., 11.

can endure and find success dealing with issues regarding teenage boys, particularly urban African American boys. This ministry project is a collaboration of several entities. They include the GMCHC (a Pentecostal church), certain faculty from a Divinity School (HUSD), a community based family life center, parents of the teenage boys, and representatives from the judicial and law enforcement communities of Washington, D.C. In studying this model, the Academy will find value in understanding how these entities, sometime have competing interest, can come together to collaborate on a particular community concern. Second, this ministry project helps to identify issues which are relevant to the local church. The genesis of this ministry model was the church. Yet the focus is purely external (neighborhood teenage boys) and collaboration is largely among external entities. This collaborative model can be studied to determine the kind of dynamic forces which propel some local churches and not others to identify certain community issues which they feel compel to lead. Finally, the academy can find value in studying this model to determine if such collaborative models like these are sustainable and if they, in fact, bring about long term attitudinal changes in the participants.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

The purpose of this ministry project is to establish a Christian based mentoring program for fifteen African American teenage boys in the Brentwood neighborhood of Washington, D.C. The premise is that a Christian based mentoring program that teaches Christian morals and ethics will cause attitudinal changes in the boys that are participating. Further, when the program is anchored by Christian adult males who serve as *examples*, it will form powerful images that will transform their view of their environment and themselves. This ministry project is collaborative in that it is fueled by an array of partners. These partners include Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church, the Alfred A. Owens, Jr. Family Life Center, select faculty from Howard University School of Divinity, and representatives from the local law enforcement and judicial communities. A pre and post survey test was administered to gauge attitudinal changes as a result of the training sessions. The purpose of this chapter is to enter into dialogue around the state of the art as it relates to mentoring urban youth.

The Impact of socio-economics, race and class

To enter into serious dialogue about the state of the art in Christian based mentoring programs for teenage African American boys in urban settings, one must first engage some of the current writings centered on the socio-economic, racial and class

impact on this population group. The current literature has shaped my thinking around the notion that Christian mentoring programs for urban African American boys do not neatly fit under the rubric of many of the programs established in the religious academies and implemented in majority populations. There is something different about the landscape of the urban African American teenage youth that must be considered in program creation and implementation. Rudy Howard, a graduate of the prestigious Fuller Theological Seminary has recruited, funded, trained, and deployed over eighty urban youth leaders to reach unchurched young people in Memphis, Tennessee. In the book *City Lights, Ministry Essentials for Reaching Urban Youth*, he writes: “Many of today’s black youth are oppressed by the false hope and fantasy that it is possible to attain instant success. In reaction to being locked out of that success through a lack of opportunity or education, or because of racism, many engage in the violence of street gangs and drug and alcohol abuse. They appear to have no vision for tomorrow because, for them, there may be no tomorrow. In addition, because many black young people come from single-parent families, many are possessed by the fear that they will wake up one morning and be alone.”¹ He closes this dialogue by saying: “Feelings of self-doubt, emotional vulnerability, and a deep sense of inferiority further possess black teenagers and keep them in bondage. While the same can be said about teenagers of any race, such issues run more deeply among blacks, given their historical background.”²

Moreover, when addressing the epistemological assumptions of liberation ethics, Mary E. Hobgood adds, “A necessary (though not sufficient) factor in generating moral

¹ Scott Larson and Karen Free, ed., *City Lights, Ministry Essentials for Reaching Urban Youth*. Source: Rudy Howard, 19 (Loveland, Colorado: Group Press, 2003), 49.

²Ibid., 49.

courage and the political astuteness to enact justice is growth in our ability to discern why some people suffers and others have privilege. Social theories that explore class, race, and gender dynamics can help students [in the Academy] see the extent to which people's success or failure has to do with their group membership, and how the suffering and disadvantage of some groups is related to the advantage and privileges of others.”³

Thus, some voices in and out of the Academy raise the necessary relevance of understanding the context and social setting of the African American urban youth [especially young boys] when fashioning a Christian mentoring program. This understanding must also be attained by well meaning parishioners who seek to appropriate salvation to the young urban male without understanding the context. It is simply not enough to read, digest and engage in critical conversation about various Christian mentoring models, without understanding the socio-economic, racial and class impact on this group of individuals. This writer has come to understand that this knowledge forms the critical link to understanding the social location of urban African American teenage boys. In his book *Race Matters*, Cornel West says, “What happened in Lost Angeles in April of 1992 [the acquittal of the police officers who brutally beat Rodney King in 1992] was neither a race riot nor a class rebellion. Rather, this monumental upheaval was a multiracial, trans-class, and largely male display of justified social rage. For all its ugly, xeno-phobic resentment, its air of adolescent carnival, and its downright barbaric behavior, it signified the sense of powerlessness in American

³ Hobgood, Mary E. “Mentoring Moral Courage: Resources In Liberation Ethics, Community Services, and Social Commitment of the Academy.” *Horizon* 26 No.1, Spring 1999, 90.

society.”⁴ He continues by saying, “To engage in a serious discussion of race in America, we must begin not with the problems of black people but with the flaws of American society – flaws rooted in historic inequalities and longstanding stereotypes.”⁵ The dialogue by these authors raises the issues of effectively enlarging the dialogue of our Christian conversations to include matters of justice. The literature around this point has persuaded this writer that any Christian mentoring program for urban African American teenage boys that does not engage in meaningful protest dialogue around their socio-economic, class and racial issues will lack an authentic connection with their reality and create a stumbling block to teaching Christian morals and ethics.

When addressing the impact of the socio-economics, race and class pressures faced by young urban African American males, writers like Fred Smith state: “They [African American males] have become nihilistic, to the point that they cast off all restraint and are perishing.”⁶ He continues by saying: “nihilism is a philosophy that regards all values as baseless. It typifies the rejection of all authoritative certainty in moral values. Moral values become subsumed by values that are empty of transcending tenets, and people become willing to refute the finite theories of morality.”⁷ Smith sees this nihilistic behavior playing out in ways where young African American boys see no vision of what they can become. Specifically, he says: “A lack of a sense of transcendence (vision) inhibits the development of a strong awareness of coherence

⁴ Cornel West, *Race Matters*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2001), 1.

⁵ West, 3.

⁶ Smith, Fred D, Jr. “A Prophetic Christian Education For Black Boys: Overcoming Violence,” *Black Theology*, 1 no 2 May (2003), 177.

⁷ Ibid., 177.

necessary to cope in a pathogenetic environment which is a racist, market-driven society, in which African American male children are scapegoats for everything that is wrong.”⁸

This literature should not, however, be taken to mean in establishing a Christian based mentoring program for African American boys one must seek resolutions to a plethora of issues in a manner proffered by those impacted. It does mean, however, that paying mere intonation to their perspectives breeds condescension on their part. The goals of a Christian mentoring program teaching moral and ethical values should be connected to a larger and more meaningful outcome. That outcome should be to “prepare African American males for the journey toward a universalizing Christian faith that enables individuals and communities to utilize the religious power of faith to create the beloved community.”⁹ That journey begins from their immediate and often nihilistic orientation. To speak of the power of God to African American teenage boys without contextualizing a God who understands their situation creates a great gulf and impedes the Christ event from becoming an integral part of their lives. So what does this mean from a Christian perspective? Perhaps Mary Hobgood said it best when she said: “From a religious perspective, the question of epistemology, or of who gets to make knowledge, is fundamentally a theo-ethical question that is critical of the fact that knowledge making has largely been monopolized by people from dominant groups. Christians cannot embody the value of justice for the neighbor-in-need if they do not have theories that place the actual situation of the neighbor in need at the center.”¹⁰ Thus,

⁸ Smith, 178.

⁹ Smith, 185.

¹⁰ Hobgood, 92.

this writer has been persuaded by the veracity of the literature that establishes of Christian based mentoring programs must be prepared to meet the participants at their point of need.

They must also be prepared to walk with them on the journey to the Christ event. Notwithstanding, one must be careful not to paint this as a *conspiracy* owned or perpetrated solely by whites. In his book *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*, Jawanza Kunjufu makes the point that there are active and passive conspirators in this saga.¹¹ The active conspirators are those who overtime “have provided the ‘theoretical’ justification for White supremacy.”¹² More poignantly, however, he says, “Those passive conspirators are African Americans who participate via their mis-education, self-hatred and apathy. This group consists of American males who do not raise their children. It also includes African American women who have double standards for their children. They have lower expectations for their sons than their daughters. This group includes African American educators who also have lowered their expectation of African American children, specifically the male child. It also includes those that sell drugs and commit murders.”¹³ So, from a Christian perspective, the local church must take ownership in understanding these issues and lead the formation of collaborative initiatives that bring meaningful, effective and holistic solutions to these mounting concerns. In doing so, the challenge is in finding the right balance in collaboration. In this regard, Dr. Harold Dean Trulear, professor at Howard University School of Divinity

¹¹ Jawanza Kunjufu, *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys, Second Edition*, (Chicago, Illinois: African American Images, 2005), 5.

¹² Ibid., 4.

¹³ Ibid., 6.

challenges us to understand that, “First, the city, including its inner-city and poor neighborhoods, exists as part of a larger *social system*, and contains within its borders a variety of smaller, interrelated institutions. These systems and institutions interconnect with and influence each other as they regularly make decisions that inform, influence, and almost control the lives of a variety of people across the metropolitan area. They include economic, educational, political, health care, family, communications, and even religious institutions.”¹⁴

Given the role that African American churches have played in these communities long before these social services arrived, it stands to reason that they must reignite the fervor to become leaders in forming effective collaborative partnerships to help improve the quality of life for members of the community. A carefully crafted Christian mentoring program for African American boys that is based in a collaborative model with other community resources can bring greater impact in creating an environment that teaches Christian morals and values. This becomes true because the Christian morals and ethics are brought alive by example. Fred Smith says, “Prophetic Christian religious education [mentoring] provides metaphors that furnish alternative screens through which input of the environment can be sifted. Metaphors that can serve as models of desire attract sufficient mimetic desire to change one’s perception of reality from violence to nonviolence.”¹⁵

¹⁴Larson and Free: Source: Harold Dean Trulear, *A Philosophy of Urban Youth Ministry*, 14.

¹⁵ Smith, 183.

Overcoming The Hermeneutical Challenge

In a Christian based mentoring program, one relies on the key tenets and teaching of the Bible. How can one really overcome the challenge of speaking principles from a book that many urban African American teenage boys believe bear no reference to or relationship with them? In many instances the Bible – has been cast in images that do not favor African American boys. Its stories have often been told less as liberation motifs, and more as instruments that have cast them to the margins of society. Moreover, the Bible which forms the basis of the Christ event was not historically interpreted as being significance to the African experience and was often used to curse the black man.¹⁶ The author Cain Hope Felder in his book *Troubling Biblical Waters, Race, Class, and Family*, states that, “Under the influence of Western culture and its by-product, racism, too many Blacks themselves believe that they are latecomers in the history of salvation. This book [Troubling Bible Waters] seeks to illuminate the Black story within The Story, so the ancient record of God’s Word takes on new meaning for the Black Church today.”¹⁷ This means that local churches seeking to establish Christian based mentoring programs for African American boys will have to consider using a hermeneutics that will bring to the forefront a paradigm that shows them that they are already *in* God’s story. When this connection is made through a hermeneutics that rightfully identifies them as part of God’s Word, teaching them the transcendent power of Christian morals and ethics will be about getting them back to their original places. Perhaps then, many of the issues raised

¹⁶ David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era, The Bible and the Justification for Slavery*, (Farnham Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 3-4.

¹⁷ Cain Hope Felder, *Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family*, Eighteenth printing, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, April 2003), xi.

by Jawanza Kunjufu in the African American male's quest "from boyhood to manhood" will be addressed.¹⁸

Additionally, mentoring and teaching Christian ethics and moral values will require a continued merger of the orthodoxy of the Academy and the orthopraxy of local churches and other faith based organizations. Vincent L Wimbush, in his article "*Rescue The Perishing*": *The Importance of Biblical Scholarship in Black Christianity*, indicate this importance by saying, "It [Black Christianity] must take Biblical scholarship seriously because only through such scholarship can it begin first to *reconstruct* as much as possible the world of early Christianity, that it may separate the wheat from the chaff, or cut through the heaps of accumulated traditions and interpretations which are not in its best interest. Then it can rightly proceed to *reshape* that chunk of Christendom of which it is part, and perhaps, contribute to reshape the form and priorities of the whole."¹⁹ "To speak of the God of Christianity is to speak of him who has defined himself according to the liberation of the oppressed. Christian theology, the pursuing of its church-function, is that discipline which analyzes the meaning of God's liberation in light of Jesus Christ, showing that all actions that make for the freedom of man are indeed the actions of God. Herein lies the heart of black theology's perspective on the theological task."²⁰ The purpose of the collaboration between the Howard University School of Divinity and Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church is to create the healthy dialogue so that orthodoxy

¹⁸ Jawanza Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You? Why Most Black men Don't Go to Church*, First Edition, Fifth Printing, (United States of America: Jawanza Kunjufu, 1994), 39-53.

¹⁹ James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, ed., *Black Theology, a documentary history*, volume two: 1980-1992: Vincent L. Wimbush, "*Rescue The Perishing*": *The Importance of Biblical Scholarship in Black Christianity*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 1998), 215.

²⁰ Cone and Wilmore, 109-110.

and orthopraxy are held in tension, creating innovative Biblical based solutions to telling the story and teaching Christian ethics and moral values. It also means collaborating with other community entities to deliver those essential services that bring humanity to the masses. “To read the Bible from the margins is to read from the context of those who suffer death, literally and figuratively, because of the way society is constructed. Those with power and privilege are not cognizant of how their interpretations can foster the oppression of others. Hence, liberating the Bible from these death-imposing interpretations require a methodical reading of the Scripture through the eyes of the disenfranchised.”²¹

The Purpose of Mentoring

It is axiomatic to suggest that mentoring is designed to teach and nurture. A deeper look at the nature of its underpinning would suggest that the idea is to shape, alter or define a more relevant *meaning perspective* that ultimately results in transformative learning.²² On a surface level, one may surmise that the concept of transformative learning as outlined by Jack Mizerow is applicable only to adult learning. However, a closer look at Mizerow’s definition of *meaning perspectives* suggest that it is very much applicable to the African American teenage boys in this Christian mentoring program as well. In defining *meaning perspectives*, Mizerow says: “A meaning perspective is a habitual set of expectations that constitutes an orienting frame of reference that we use in projecting symbolic models and that serves as a, usually tacit, belief system for

²¹ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Reading the Bible from the Margins*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 6.

²² Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 41-42.

interpreting and evaluating the meaning of experience.”²³ The relevancy to Mizerow’s definition to this ministry project is that these teenage boys, though young, have already developed the psychological lenses through which they view their experiences. Though distorted, the epistemic, sociolinguistic and psychological perspectives of these boys have already affected such things as their *external/internal evaluation criteria, secondary socialization, self-concept, and psychological defense mechanism*.²⁴ Since these “meaning perspectives provide us with criteria for judging or evaluating right and wrong, bad and good, beautiful and ugly, true and false, appropriate and inappropriate,”²⁵ it is important to begin the process of *remoralizing*²⁶ the negative perspectives of teenage African American boys such as the ones in this Christian mentoring program. Their environment has helped to create distorted meaning perspectives for them at rapid pace. Cheryl Sanders, in her writings, defines remoralization by saying it is designed to accomplish these goals: “1. To restore to a morally sound condition: *The prayer habit remoralizes those who embrace it*. 2. To strengthen the spirit, courage and discipline and stay power: *Love and acceptance remoralizes the men in the single fathers’ support group*. 3. To enable creative problem-solving through restoration of mental clarity and order: *The adult mentor’s close supervision remoralizes the adolescent*.”²⁷

²³Ibid., 42.

²⁴Mizerow, 43.

²⁵ Mizerow, 44.

²⁶ Cheryl J. Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics, For A Liberated People, a Path to African American Social Transformation*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 104.

²⁷ Ibid., 104-105.

It is the community based church that can best play a significant role in fulfilling this purpose of mentoring. “No theme expressed the spirit of religion better than the identification of faith with humanity and community. Whether the term describing this relationship is love, justice, compassion, helping, responsibility, mercy, grace, charity, or a host of other similar sentiments and actions, the message is one of positive feeling and support for others...”²⁸ Because of its resident status in communities it is the African American church that must continue to be vigilant in the pursuit of providing Christian education for boys such as the one in this Christian mentoring program.

Christian Based Urban Youth Mentoring Models

The approaches to Christian based mentoring programs for urban youth are diverse. Perhaps this is because much of the dynamics shaping these programs are driven by specifics of the socio-economic circumstances of the particular locale. Fernando Arzola, Jr., in his book *Toward a Prophetic Youth Ministry, Theory and Praxis in Urban Context*, states: “Urban youth ministries have in common only three identifying components: (1) they are Christian, (2) they are located in the city, and (3) they minister to youth. Beyond this, urban youth ministries are as varied as the churches in the body of Christ.”²⁹ In evaluating several archetypes of urban youth ministry, his work suggests that one must be cognizant of the primary reason a local church enters into urban ministry for youth.³⁰ His assertion is that the primary reason for engaging in urban youth ministry,

²⁸ Bernard Spilka, Ralph W. Wood, Jr., and Richard L. Gorsuch, *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985), 274.

²⁹ Fernando Arzola, Jr., *Toward a Prophetic Youth Ministry, Theory and Praxis in Urban Context*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 17.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

spiritual formation, personal development, or social change for youth, will determine the approach to ministry, and by extension, the type of youth mentoring program that one will engage in.³¹ Arzola, Jr. outlines four paradigms of youth minister in the urban context. They are, the traditional youth ministry paradigm where “the focus and assumption of this model begin with *ministry programs*, then pursue how they may be addressed to youth.”³² When one looks closer at this paradigm, one would surmise that churches who engage in a mentoring program under this rubric would be most likely not to engage youth in dialogue prior to establishing the mentoring program and would most likely not consider aspects of the environmental factors impacting youth in its design. The design would most likely be directly from its doctrines and beliefs and somewhat dogmatic in its view. The second paradigm that Arzola, Jr. discusses is the liberal youth ministry paradigm where “the emphasis of this paradigm is on *compassionate ministry* for urban youth. That is, its primary purpose is developing a felt-needs with the *felt needs* of the youth and then addresses them through youth ministry programs.”³³ To implement a mentoring program from this paradigm, Arzola, Jr. states: “these programs [would] include support groups, mentoring, family-based initiatives, intergenerational activities, trips, arts and crafts and choirs.”³⁴ In his discussion on the third paradigm called the *activist youth ministry* paradigm, Arzola, Jr. states: “The paradigm begins by identifying *urban issues* affecting youth then developing appropriate ministry program which address

³¹ Arzola, Jr., 18-19.

³² Arzola, Jr., 20.

³³ Arzola, Jr., 21.

³⁴ Ibid., 21.

these issues or needs. This youth ministry model, and mentoring programs emanating from it would be focused on justice issues, driven by the ideology of revolution and at times may be confrontational.³⁵ Finally, Azola, Jr. highlights the fourth, ministry paradigm, which is the *prophetic youth ministry* paradigm. He argues that “the prophetic youth ministry is the most effective and holistic paradigm for ministering to urban youth...because of the prophetic youth ministry’s Christ-centered perspective (instead of program-centered, felt-needs centered or urban-issues centered), its evaluative question is, How is Christ growing, deepening and manifesting *in* the lives of urban youth?”³⁶ He goes on to say: “This evaluative question shifts entirely the programmatic development of the youth ministry [e.g., mentoring] by focusing on Christ first and then considering programmatic questions second. The question allows for a more holistic and integrative approach – theoretically and programmatically. It focuses on Christ *in* youth.”³⁷ He concludes his argument by opining that an urban ministry model that does not include at least three of the five criteria he sets out, is not holistic. They include being: programmatic holistic; engagement of the community; liberational; eschatological; and transformational.³⁸ The discourse of Azola, Jr. offers food for thought on how local churches can begin to shape a more holistic mentoring program for African American teenage boys in urban settings. Perhaps one of the more poignant conclusions that this writer reaches from Azola, Jr. work is that the idea of a prophetic ministry [e.g., Christian mentoring program] requires expanding ones view of ministry which may be narrowly

³⁵ Azola, Jr., 24.

³⁶ Azola, Jr., 25.

³⁷ Azola, Jr. 25-29.

³⁸ Azola, Jr., 32-33.

focused or defined by denominational dogma. This expansion of views could lead to a more dynamic Christian mentoring program that would help to alleviate some of the nihilism that is resident in the mind set of so many urban African American teenage boys. It would also help them to find meaning in the transcendent power of God and give vision. To this point, the author Fred Smith says, “The inability of one to comprehend, manage and find meaning in one’s environment leads to a deep sense of nihilism.”³⁹ He goes on to say, “The lack of a vision results in the inability to comprehend the transcendent nature of one’s personality. Theological questioning of the truly transcendent nature of the world, and ourselves, results in a futile search for meaning and love in places that can never satisfy either need. Nihilism then is a form of deviated transcendence.”⁴⁰ This is the world that Christian mentoring seeks to enter into and create bridge dialogue. Smith says it best, “The goal of prophetic Christian religious education [e.g., Christian mentoring program] is to correct the problem of deviated transcendence.”⁴¹

In chapter seven of his book entitled *Adam, Where Are You? Why Black Men Don’t (Do Not) Go to Church*, Jawanza Kunjufu discusses several models of ministry that are worthy of note.⁴² This writer will discuss three of Kunjufu’s observations that he indicates requires “a greater level of commitment to empower African American men,”⁴³

³⁹Smith, Fred D, Jr. Source: Black Theology, 1 no 2 My 2003, p 178.

⁴⁰Ibid., 178.

⁴¹Smith, 179.

⁴² Jawanza Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You? Why Most Black men Don’t Go to Church*, First Edition, 115-132.

⁴³Kunjufu, 122.

and by extension urban teenage African American boys. The first relates to his discussion on mentoring model anchored in Bible study. Kunjufu believe that Bible study can form powerful learning structures for African American men when added to such activities as men's fellowship. While he acknowledges that it is difficult to get African American males to regularly attend Bible study, he acknowledges that "Men's Bible Study class is a power experience to continue the fellowship men receive at the annual men's retreat."⁴⁴ Further, he offers three reasons why he believes Bible study combined with Africentricity strengthen ministry models. They are: "The grapevine informs unbelievers that all men are welcomed. Second, if you want to be with a group of men, who are looking at the issues of unemployment, crime, drugs, and family stability from an Africentric point of view that is Biblically based, and admission is free, it's an excellent opportunity. Last, because the meeting is weekly rather than monthly, brothers are able to remember better, and if they miss one, there is always next week."⁴⁵ Kunjufu concludes this dialogue by stating that: "I think it's [it is] an excellent opportunity [Bible study combined with Africentricity] for men to come together Biblically and secularly. Too many programs are either Christocentric or Africentric, but not both."

While Kunjufu's Bible study and Africentricity model is one that could have been adopted for this ministry project, there appear to be some noted shortfalls. This model appears to overly emphasize one way transmission of information and the creation of an environment that merely engages in dialogue. Kunjufu, himself, said of a ministry model of this type that he attended: "I naively thought the men would respond to the challenge

⁴⁴Ibid., 122.

⁴⁵Kunjufu, 122.

and join that ministry [a challenge to join a Nehemiah ministry model] or a similar ministry and move from theory to practice, but they were so comfortable listening and rapping that those boys [those in the Nehemiah project] still need men.⁴⁶ He went on to say: “Those men were more comfortable sitting and talking about issues they have not read about and wishing that only the pastor would lead the session. These men wanted to be entertained, and that reflects the state of Black manhood even in some liberation churches.”⁴⁷ What Kunjufu sees is a pattern that can sometime be typical of local church’s involvement in matters that negatively affect urban African American teenage boys. Many local churches are content teaching the Biblical principles of the Bible and discussing the problems faced by this population group. Only the bold ones are willing to adopt models of ministry that will bring engagement in the issues as they are discussed. When turning to ministry models that would allow for more active engagement with urban teenage boys and providing examples for them, Kunjufu discusses two. The first is the Nehemiah project and the second is Rites of Passage. Nehemiah projects are named after the Biblical prophet of the same name. As they relate to engaging youth, perhaps the Greater Milwaukee Nehemiah project best summarizes why such use of the name Nehemiah. In their response to why the name Nehemiah, their website states: “Nehemiah has been lifted up for centuries as a model of passionate and faithful caring, brilliant strategy and motivation. He confronted an environment of despair, hopelessness, and physical danger. His efforts and those of the people he worked with resulted in the successful rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem. Nehemiah, his philosophy and active

⁴⁶Kunjufu, 124.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 124.

response to life's challenges, offers a model of hope for people faced with poverty and hopelessness, and those who work for them. And so the name," The Nehemiah Project."⁴⁸ As it relates to Nehemiah projects, Kunjufu writes of an experience he had "where a church adopted a school in their local neighborhood."⁴⁹ Of significant note is that it was the pastor of the local church that took the initiative to engage in collaborative leadership and dialogue with the principal of the school to begin to address the need for mentorship of the teenage boys in the school. It was the death of one teenage boy in the neighborhood that prompted engagement by the pastor.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, this action led to empowering the community through collaborative leadership. Perhaps Kunjufu's own description of the pledges made under the Nehemiah project and his emotional reaction to them, best form the image of the powerful potential of this ministry model for teenage African American boys. In this regard, Kunjufu states:

The men said [to the teenage boys], 'I promise to call you once a week. I promise to visit with you once a week. I promise to review your report card when it is released. I promise to stay in your life until you either go to college or become gainfully employed. I make this promise to you. I make this promise to the school. I make this promise to your church. I make this promise to God.' The boys then responded, 'I accept your promise, I look forward to your call. I look forward to spending time with you. I will do everything I can to make you proud of my report card. I will graduate from high school and I will do everything I can to go to college.' The pastor and the principal then said, 'if you do that, then we will do everything we possibly can to find the economic resources, if you do not receive a scholarship, for you to attend college.' It was at this point I was supposed to speak. I just couldn't do it. The tears did not allow me to speak. Several times this has happened in my career. The tears became contagious, and

⁴⁸ <http://nehemiahprojectmilwaukee.org/#Whythenametxt> [accessed February 14, 2011].

⁴⁹ Kunjufu, 125.

⁵⁰ Kunjufu, 126.

the boys and men hugged each other. Have you ever seen 200 men hug 200 boys while crying?”⁵¹

Thus, Kunjufu sees much potential in Nehemiah type mentoring models for teenage African American boys. His next ministry model involves Rites of Passage. The Rites of Passage mentoring programs require more standardized set of criteria. Unlike the Nehemiah Project where one adult male is paired with one teenage boy, “Rites of Passage requires a group of men to work with a group of boys following the same [emphasis added] Africentric curriculum.”⁵² Kunjufu continues by stating: “The national Rites of Passage organization has created minimal standards that all programs are to adhere to. That does not exist in a role model program. These nine minimal standards include spirituality, history, economics, politics, community involvement, career development, physical development, family responsibility, and values.”⁵³ Kunjufu’s dialogue about the various ministry models has shape this writer’s thinking that different models may be appropriate depending on the unique circumstances surrounding the local church and the community in which it resides. Kunjufu’s missive has also helped to shape this writer’s thinking that local churches must become more actively engaged in community issues that affect teenagers, such as African American boys. Without this involvement – an understanding and connection with the community - a Rites of Passages model or a Bible study ministry model mixed with Africentricity may suffer equal fate, failure. In the book titled *“The Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring, A Multiple Perspectives Approach,”* the writer Andrew Miller states: “The rapid rise of youth mentoring programs raises the

⁵¹Ibid, 125.

⁵² Kunjufu, 126.

⁵³Ibid., 126.

issues about how to maintain the quality of programs.”⁵⁴ In comparing and contrasting mentorship models for youth, Andrew Miller’s work lays out over twenty-three best practice principles under the rubric of Planning (one to six), Mentor Recruitment to Matching (seven to eleven), Mentoring Processes (twelve to nineteen), and Evaluation (twenty to twenty-three).⁵⁵ The key principles outlined by Andrew Miller for those who wish to form a formal youth mentoring program include the following:

1. Youth mentoring programs should have an infrastructure and organizational capacity to plan and operate an effective program.
2. Youth mentoring programs should have a program manual that includes key policies and procedures.
3. An audit and needs assessment should be conducted in the area.
4. Mentoring programs should target specific issues and base program practices around an understanding of how the mentoring program will address those issues.
5. Mentoring programs should build partnerships with other agencies working with the same client group.
6. Mentoring programs need to develop effective funding strategies for sustainability.
7. Mentoring programs need a written plan, effective marketing materials, and recruitment strategies aimed at their target mentors.
8. Youth mentoring programs need processes for screening out unsuitable mentors.
9. Effective training (which should be ongoing) should enable mentors to understand the needs of the client group.
10. Clear selection criteria, induction, and ongoing training for protégés should enable them to gain more from the mentoring relationship.
11. Mentors and protégés should have a say over their match with opportunities to meet before a final match is made.
12. Mentoring relationships should be sustained over a period of at least six months.
13. Mentors and protégés should meet regularly (probably weekly), and mentors should be proactive in making arrangements and initiating telephone contact.
14. Mentoring programs should provide ongoing support for and supervision of youth mentoring relationships.

⁵⁴Tammy D. Allen and Lillian T. Eby, Editors, *The Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring, A Multiple Perspectives Approach*: Source: Andrew Miller, Best Practices for Formal Youth Mentoring, 307, (Malden, MA: 2010), 307.

⁵⁵Allen and Eby, 309-321.

15. Mentoring programs should support mentors in arranging enjoyable and structured activities.
16. Mentoring programs should develop a theory of how the mentoring process aims to impact on program outcomes.
17. Programs should seek the support of parents/carers but not their active engagement in mentoring processes (Skinner and Fleming, 1999).
18. Mentors should seek to develop equality in the relationship through mutual respect, encouragement, and openness.
19. The ending of the mentoring relationship should be carefully managed.
20. Mentoring programs should be able to demonstrate that they represent value for money.
21. Mentoring programs should conduct internal monitoring and evaluation, and use agreed national standards to benchmark and improved the quality of program management, operations, and outcomes (National Network, w001)
22. The evaluation of youth mentoring programs should, where feasible, involve the use of control or comparison groups.
23. Mentoring programs should develop a range of measures to judge the impact of the mentoring on protégés and, where available, they should use benchmarks for comparison.⁵⁶

He concludes his discussion on best practices in youth mentoring with a caution that “evidenced-based best practices in youth mentoring are patchy...It is up to countries developing youth mentoring to ensuring that there is more evidenced-based good practice guidance available founded on research into their own programs.”⁵⁷ The review of Andrew Miller works provided some structured guidance that this author believes all churches engaging in youth mentoring programs should consider. To add to the academy literature, churches should look to engage in collaborative partnership, as done in this ministry project, and structure their programs around more rigorous criteria that measures outcome. The notion of mentoring African American teenagers in urban settings out of a “feels good” syndrome could have devastating consequences for the participants. It could also reflect negatively on the local church’s role in the community. When structured

⁵⁶Allen and Eby, 309-321.

⁵⁷Allen and Eby, 322.

programs are developed and proper links are made with the academy and local entities, best practices can be established that adds significantly to the existing literature.

In the book titled *City Lights, Ministry Essentials for Reaching Urban Youth*, Dr. Harold Dean Trulear outlines a philosophy for urban youth ministry, and by extension urban youth mentoring programs.⁵⁸ Trulear challenges his readers to look beyond the neighborhoods and its people who have often been stigmatized without a true understanding of the broader impact that systems have “on the lives of urban, even inner-city youth (such as the lack of affordable housing).”⁵⁹ He goes on to state that “If we are benefiting from and contributing to that system, then it is theologically impossible to argue that we bring Jesus to poor and distressed neighborhoods.”⁶⁰ In Trulear’s mentoring model, six foundational principles are espoused. They are:

1. The challenge of targeting high-risk kids
2. The Need for focused leadership
3. The challenge of capacity building
4. The need for collaboration
5. Building relationships of trust; and,
6. The role of faith⁶¹

Trulear sees a plethora of problems when urban youth mentoring programs do not take care to carefully consider these factors. In facing the challenge to target high-risk kids, he sees problems with the traditional approach of recruiting participants. He cautions that “targeting a community’s youth without specifying a strategy that addresses

⁵⁸Larson and Fee: Source: Harold D. Trulear, *A Philosophy of Urban Youth Ministry*, 14-22.

⁵⁹Larson and Fee: Source Harold D. Trulear, 15.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁶¹Larson and Fee: Source: Harold D. Trulear, *A Philosophy of Urban Youth Ministry*, 14-22.

the identification and recruitment of high-risk youth leads to a program that works with the good kids in a bad neighborhood. Pointing to ‘successes among such youth amounts to a form of bait-and switch ministry.’⁶² He further states: “our ministries must be discerning in identifying the *most difficult* (high-risk youth), as opposed to merely at-risk youth. Here’s the difference: High-risk youth are those youth who are already involved in criminal and violent activities or who have been deemed likely candidates for such behavior by neighborhood residents, agencies, school officials, or community leaders.”⁶³

In responding to the issue of focused leadership, Trulear states: “When governed by the tyranny of need, however, congregations become fragmented in their approach to service, stretched to the limits of their resources and often plagued by an unsystematic delivery system. In responding to the immediacy of crises before them, many faith-based organizations’ allocation of resources lead to shortfall in other areas, weaken the ongoing infrastructure of the congregations’ community service system, and lead to burnout. Focusing solely on individual needs also keeps a congregation from seeing the big picture-the systemic picture.”⁶⁴ In discussing the challenge of capacity building Trulear argues that churches must take on the challenge of institutionalizing the work that may be led by a charismatic leader so that wider and sustaining impact can occur.⁶⁵ As it relates to the need for collaboration in establishing effective urban mentoring programs; Trulear states: “One key way a ministry can build capacity is to forge strategic relationships with

⁶²Larson and Fee: Source Harold D. Trulear, 17.

⁶³Ibid., p. 17.

⁶⁴Larson and Fee: Source: Harold D. Trulear, 19.

⁶⁵Ibid., 19.

other institutions that impact the lives of youth.”⁶⁶ When discussing the factor of building relationships of trust, Trulear states: “Trust is the basis for significant relationship building with high-risk youth. Developing a trustworthy relationship is critically important as part of a strategy for gaining knowledge of who’s who in the community in general and within the urban youth subculture in particular. Building relationships with a difficult-to-reach population take time, on the streets as well as during programs hours. Time on the streets involves developing a presence in the neighborhood sufficient to identify and win the trust of high-risk youth.”⁶⁷ The final tenet of Trulear’s pillars is that of the role of *Faith* in the equation of urban youth mentoring. In this regard, Trulear states: “We all need some form of meaning system to navigate life’s journey. The faith community offers such a moral compass to high-risk youth. Ideally, it is one of the few places where such young people can find caring adults to share their faith with youth – not through sermonizing or confrontational means, but rather through relational methods that can accept young people where they are, but point them toward a more positive hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11).”⁶⁸ As faith communities, Trulear states: “You must discern before God how he would have you adequately address the impact of the whole city, but then focus on that part that he’s calling you to. As you do that, your ministry to urban youth may then call you to work with the families of these young people as well.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶Ibid., 19.

⁶⁷Larson and Fee: Source: Harold D. Trulear, 20.

⁶⁸Larson and Fee: Source: Harold D. Trulear, 21.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 21.

Conclusion

A number of ideas surround the notion of how Christian Mentoring Programs for urban teenage boys should be established and maintained. A careful digesting of the literature persuades the thinking of this writer that there are several key criteria that will help make the program a success. First, research and review of mentoring literature and best practices should precede establishment of the program. Second, it's important to understand the impact of the social-economic, racial and class on the group in question and one must be willing to meet participants at their point of need. Conversations should be enlarged to include matters of justice. Third, a genuine hermeneutics should be used that places those teenage boys in the Bible by showing the African presence therein. Fourth, Christian moral and ethical teachings must draw their examples from the Bible to be authentic. Fifth, collaboration with National, State and local entities, faith based and others, that have genuine interest in or make decision impacting the community, strengthens the impact of the program. Sixth, mentoring programs for urban African American boys require commitment to be in it for the long haul. Finally, it must be kept in mind that these things are taught and done for the greater outcome. That outcome should be to "prepare African American males for the journey toward a universalizing Christian faith that enables individuals and communities to utilize the religious power of faith to create the beloved community."⁷⁰ In Christian mentoring programs such as the one designed for this project should have specific outcomes that measure attitudinal changes as it relate to specific Christian moral and ethical values taught. The specific

⁷⁰ Smith, 185.

moral and ethical values taught to the teenage boys in this Christian mentoring program focused on God and heaven, respect for others, respect for parents and authority, and valuing property.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Synonyms such as adviser, counselor, teacher, instructor, proctor, master and guide are often used to describe the term mentoring.¹ Regardless of the descriptors, one of the key tenets involves developing a relationship between the two parties and the transference of knowledge. To be effective in mentoring, these relationships must be grounded in the functional idea of *example*.² When a mentor instructs and provides positive example of what is taught, it can in many instances, encourage the concept of positive relationship among mentees. This project will explore the collaboration between the Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church (GMCHC), select faculty from Howard University School of Divinity (HUSD), a non-profit community center, parents of the teenage boys in the project, and representative from the Washington District of Columbia (also referred to as Washington, D.C.) Judicial and Law Enforcement communities. The Christian based mentoring program will be structured to teach key Christian moral and ethical principles to teenage African American males between in the Brentwood neighborhood located in Ward 5 of Washington D.C. The specific moral and ethical values to be taught to the teenage boys in this Christian mentoring program focused on God and heaven, respect for others, respect for parents and authority, and valuing property. The project will

¹ Jesse Stein and Stuart Berg Flexter, editors, *The Random House Thesaurus College Edition*, (New York, N.Y.: Random House, Inc., 1991), 457.

² Benjamin Fiore, *The Function of Personal Example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistle*, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1986), 209-210.

focus on conducting a needs survey, designing and teaching three key Christian moral and ethical principles, and conducting a pre and post test to determine if the participants acquired the knowledge intended. The teenage boys were selected by working with the District of Columbia Area Neighborhood Commissioner (ANC) representative for Ward 5. His knowledge of the community and his personal knowledge of many of the boys in the Brentwood neighborhood helped to target at risk boys who would benefit from the program. The expected result is the targeted group of fifteen young males will become knowledgeable of the specific biblical moral and ethical principles taught, which will assist them in day-to-day decision-making. The official program lasted a total of five weeks. Participants met on Saturdays for two hours. Four of the weeks were dedicated the moral and ethical principles which have been identified. The length of this project was too short to gather empirical data on behavioral changes.

Two Biblical passages which chronicle stories about relationships will be used. The Old Testament Biblical text is I Samuel 19:4-6. In this text, Jonathan risks his own life by taking a stand against King Saul, his father, and his evil plans directed towards his friend David. At the heart of this pericope lies the notion where covenant relationships are formed based on knowledge of moral and ethical values, “they can play a significant role in shaping proper courses of action, even when those actions go against the norms and peer pressure of an environment which may foster negative behavior.”³ Moreover, these relationships will create a foundation on which to build positive relationships which transcend generational boundaries. This would serve as a catalyst for reducing cyclical

³ Dr. Daryl Hairston, Professor, United Theological Seminary, (October 2009), Peer Session for Collaborative Leadership, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

conflicts which are often generational and have endured in some case for more than thirty-five years. In neighborhoods such as Brentwood, dislike among young boys from different housing projects or different streets, are often fueled by incidents which happened decades ago. The David and Jonathan story demonstrates the transcendent power of covenant relationship when David, some years later, shows kindness to Jonathan's descendant, Mephibosheth," for Jonathan's sake" (II Samuel 9:1).

The New Testament Biblical text of Titus 1:4-8 chronicles the mission given to Titus by his teacher and mentor, the Apostle Paul. The first aspect of Titus' charge was to stay behind in Crete and "set in order things that are wanting" (Titus 1:5) in the church. His mission to get things right was directed to the church first. Although some were Christians, the Cretans were regarded as having a notorious national reputation for lying and displaying other negative behaviors.⁴ Titus was to serve as an *example*. In turn, his *example* as well as those he led would create a framework for the church to have a greater impact in transforming the community at large.⁵ The consideration in this pericope as it relates to this project is relationships grounded in Christian moral and ethical values form powerful examples which, in their very essence, become instructional. Embracing this notion means local churches such as Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church could have similar impact on surrounding communities. However, it requires its members to become the epicenter for forming collaborative efforts to mentor youth through instruction as well as *example*.

⁴ Reverend Dr. G. Mike Butterworth, et.al, *Zondervan Handbook to the Bible, revised and expanded edition*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 737.

⁵ Jouette M. Bassler, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 197.

Most of the young males in this project are being raised in single parent homes led my mothers and are part of what would be considered the lower socio-economic strata of society. Most live in *project housing* and lack positive male role model in their lives. This information was derived from initial surveys questionnaire answered by each child. Further verification was derived through discussions with their parent. As such, they often seek role models associated with gangs, drug dealing and other negative behavior emanating from what is sometimes referred to as *street life*. *Street Life* as used in this project refers to the rubric which guides the life of those living their lives outside what is considered the norm of ethical and moral behavior. It constitutes an internal code of ethics and morals followed and best understood by those who live and follow it. Their relationships are rarely grounded in the idea of covenant.⁶ Instead, they are often swayed by the reality of voracity. The benefit arising out of this project is the collaborative effort of linking those who teach Christianity – *academia*, with those who practice it – *ecclesia*, supported by community, parental, and judicial and law enforcement involvement, will demonstrate a more sustainable model can be created for addressing the needs of young urban teenage boys. Dr. Cain Hope Felder alludes to the connection between academia and the ecclesia in his book *Stony The Road We Trod, African American Biblical Interpretation*, when he states: “Many black biblical scholars consider that the black church, far from being a liability requiring apology, is in fact one of the greatest contexts

⁶ Saul M. Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relationships In Israel and its Environment,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 115/2 (1996), 204.

for black biblical interpretation. The historic witness of the black church affords black Bible scholars a rich framework for studying the Bible.”⁷

As a strongly credentialed Academician who has also practiced the faith, Dr. Felder is positioned at a juncture to best see the intersecting points. While what he argues is relative to the African American community, his assertions are universal in application. To underpin the importance both historically and prospectively (in this case as it relates to African Americans), he goes on to state: “There is a great tradition of black biblical understanding. It is our calling in our time and place in history to recover, enlarge, and proclaim that tradition. We must use the training that we have received, but we must also argue with and correct such training, so we can apply our tools, language, and theological sensitivity to those realities that we were not to take seriously academically. What is at stake is the importance of our history.”⁸ Some may refer to this as “faith seeking the clarity of its cause.”⁹ In its essence, however, it is probably best seen as understanding the Gospel and Christian life as the struggle for the “transformation of human persons and societies as manifestations of and in expectation of the reign of God.”¹⁰ From this perspective the author James H. Cone says, “This means that any talk about God that fails

⁷ Cain Hope Felder, ed., *Stony The Road We Trod, African American Biblical Interpretation*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 7.

⁸ Felder, 8.

⁹ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology, Third Edition*, (New York, NY-Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing 2002), 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

to take seriously the righteousness of God as revealed in the liberation of the weak and downtrodden is not Christian language.”¹¹

The question at this juncture is whether a Christian based mentoring program is necessary for successful mentoring. Mary E. Hobgood discusses this issue in an article in a Horizon article: “This essay will argue that while these traditional resources from religious and social theory are crucial to the task of ethics, they are not sufficient enough to promote the insight and experiences needed for moral conviction, and, most importantly, the courage to implement it.”¹²

On the surface, Hobgood appears to dismiss the idea of a pure Christian based mentoring program as incomplete. However, closer scrutiny and a contextual analysis of this work, suggests her findings are not incongruent with the initial hypothesis set forth for this project. Hobgood essentially argues that while the values gained in the Academy “necessitates epistemologies, or ways of knowing...white affluent students need flesh and blood encounters that are only available to them in community based learning projects.”¹³ More than anything, her paper argues that orthodoxy (right belief) must be inextricably connected with orthopraxy (application) for true learning to occur. With this understanding of Hobgood’s article, one can conclude since this project is grounded in a collaborative model which merges academia, the ecclesia, parental, community based initiatives, and judicial and law enforcement, her requirements are met. Moreover, in this

¹¹ James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, ed., *Black Theology, a documentary history, Volume one: 1966-1979, Black Theology and Black Liberation, Second Edition, Revised*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 109.

¹² Mary E. Hobgood, “Mentoring Moral Courage: Resources in Liberation Ethics, Community Services, and Social Commitment of the Academy,” *Horizon* 26, No 1 (spring 1999), 86.

¹³ Hobgood, 86.

project, the Christ event becomes the central focus in providing the opportunity for transformative learning for these boys. By providing the opportunity the environment for reflective learning, they will have the opportunity to change their views concerning the environment in which they live.¹⁴

This line of inquiry leads to additional questions. What is, or what should be the role, if any, of other religious groups and non-religious based organizations in mentoring or imparting better decision-making practices among male youth in the community? In this project, there is no argument offered or supported that *only* Christian based mentoring programs are capable of establishing moral and ethical frameworks for young males to make better decisions. Experiences in Washington, D.C. have shown that non-Christian religious groups, such as the Nation of Islam, have been effective in this regard. Further, the Islamic focus on moral and ethical values is not necessarily incongruent.¹⁵ The idea espoused in this project is not so much that there cannot be similarity in moral and ethical values taught through different religious and non-religious efforts. Rather, it is to focus the work, for evangelistic purposes, on the source of the [desired] conduct.”¹⁶ Philip Towner in his book, *The Goal of Our Instructions, The Structure of Theology and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles*, says it this way, “By this I mean that for the author the

¹⁴ Patricia Cranton, *Professional Development as Transformative Learning-New Perspectives for Teachers of Adults*, (San Francisco; Josey-Bass 1996), 132.

¹⁵ Ingrid Mattson, *The Story of the Qur'an; Its History and Place In Muslim Life*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 200-202.

¹⁶ Philip H. Towner, *The Goal Of Our Instruction, The Structure of Theological and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles*, (Worcester, England; Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 253.

Christ-event is the determinative factor in enabling the believer to manifest this respectable behavior.”¹⁷

When one takes a deeper look at the youth in the Brentwood neighborhood of Ward 5, one can see that many have developed *distorted meaning perspectives* and lack decision-making frameworks which are grounded in ethical and moral considerations. The results of these inadequate decision-making frameworks are often borne out in the alarming statistics of high crime rates, high school dropout rates and high HIV/AIDS infection rates. In her book, Patricia Cranton outlines what the author calls the *pause factor* concerning appropriate decision-making. She states: “When people think, they delay action until they (1) understand the situation thoroughly, (2) know the goal they want to reach, (3) consider as many options as possible for reaching the goal, (4) weigh the options, and (5) make a plan, all before taking action.”¹⁸ In a mentoring program where Christian ethics and moral values are taught as key tenets, authentic strides can be made in building a framework for improving the life style decisions made by young males in the neighborhood by integrating such a model in the program. These mentoring efforts must also be based on the idea of problem posing education and not merely the repetition of Scripture or dogma. In his book entitled *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; Paulo Freire addresses this concept by stating: “Problem-posing education, responding to the essence of consciousness – *intentionality* - rejects communiqués and embodies communications. It epitomizes the special characteristic of consciousness; being conscious of, not only as intent on object but as turned in upon itself in a Jasperian “split”

¹⁷ Ibid., 253.

¹⁸ Cranton, 76-77.

– consciousness as consciousness of consciousness.¹⁹ The young males who will be taught Christian moral and ethical values as part of this program will be trained in a scenario based setting where they will be required to stop and think through the available options to resolve the problem confronting them. It is hoped that this framework will provide a Christian pause-factor where each of these young boys will reflect on themselves, the Christian moral and ethical values taught, as well as the impact of their decisions on others as they make daily decisions.

Historical Foundations

According to Lion's Concise Bible Encyclopedia, as far back as Abraham's time, nations such as Sumer were developing educational systems to train youth for work in all aspects of society, including religious life in the temples.²⁰ Similarly, schools of training in ancient Egypt were also initially attached to the temples.²¹ In Ur, the ancestral home of the Biblical character Abraham, the school "was used to train people for religious, commercial, and governmental work."²² By the time the nation of Israel was formed, the concept of learning was inextricably tied to the idea that "knowledge comes from God. He is the greatest of all teachers."²³ Although the term *mentoring* was not officially used in these relationship based learning models, typically a more senior person such as a

¹⁹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 30th Anniversary Edition*, (New York, London: Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2006), 79.

²⁰ Pat Alexander, ed., *The Lion Concise Bible Encyclopedia*, (Bodmin, Cornwall: Lion Publishing plc, 1980), 181-182.

²¹ Ibid., 183.

²² Ralph Grower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, (Chicago: Moody Press 198), 76.

²³ Alexander, 183-184.

Priest, served as the mediator, vested with the responsibility for teaching, mentoring and ensuring the appropriate knowledge and intent was communicated to the youths. Much of the teaching and instructions were cast in religious frameworks, but also designed to communicate a concept of how to make decisions in society at large. Moreover, societal life in places like the nation of Israel was inextricably tied to the concept of God teaching and religion. It has been noted by authors such as Alfred Edersheim that, "From the first day of its existence, a religious atmosphere surrounded the child of Jewish parents."²⁴ Thus, the idea of teaching moral and ethical values appears to have been ingrained in a large number of religious cultures. The difference noted may be that historically, up to this point, the teachings appear to have been either reserved for those in the religious cult or in a certain strata of society.

Though not readily recognized, the concept of mentoring was also deeply imbedded in Israel's prophetic tradition. Rickie Moore, in his article in the *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, argues for the connection of the prophetic tradition to the role of mentoring. He links the role of Biblical characters such as Moses' in the Torah, "as the prophet *par excellence*, to that of mentoring as he teaches and instructs the next generation."²⁵ Moore expounds on this thesis in his article by stating: "The implicit connections between the prophetic vocation and mentoring that appear in Numbers 11 are greatly enhanced in light of the explicit concern, which runs through the entire Moses

²⁴ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. (United States of America: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1993), 157-158.

²⁵ Rickie Moore, "The Prophet As Mentor". *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, Volume 15.2, (2007), 158.

macro-narrative, for the teaching and raising them up of the next generation.”²⁶ Moore specifically connects the two roles of prophet and mentoring tradition by citing the Passover story as recorded in Exodus 12:24, 26-28: “And you shall observe this word as an ordinance for you and your children forever...And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’, you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the Passover of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when he struck the Egyptians and delivered our household.’ So the people bowed their head and worshipped. Then the children of Israel went away and did as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron’.”²⁷ In a response to Rickie Moore’s assertion that mentoring was part of the rubric of prophetic tradition, Walter Brueggemann indicates that Moore has indeed shown how mentoring can, and in instances must be carriers of counter-opinion, “so the mentoring of prophetic tradition is toward freedom, courage, and justice as an urgent enterprise.”²⁸ Brueggemann’s assessment provides a poignant view of the goal of this project in that the idea is to establish a mentoring program that will teach young males how to have the freedom and courage to carry counter-opinions to that which they have learned in the streets.

As we shift to mentoring and teaching youth in the early beginnings of Christianity, Jesus the Christ becomes a central figure for moral and ethical consideration which would be taught to adults as well as youth. It is clear from recorded Biblical text

²⁶ Ibid., 159.

²⁷ Moore, 159.

²⁸ Walter Brueggemann, “A Response to Rickie Moore’s *The Prophet As Mentor*”, (Sage Publication, Los Angeles: Volume 15.2, 2007), 174. Is this a journal? If yes, see footnote comment below.

that Jesus responded to youth outside the Temple in ways even his disciples initially resisted (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16, and Luke 18:15-17). The question must be asked, however, what moral or ethical teachings did Jesus convey and were they radically different from what was taught in the Torah? This is an important historical question to consider when structuring a Christian based youth mentoring program. If Jesus' moral and ethical teachings, in this newly found religion later called Christianity, were radically different from that of the Torah as some Biblical scholars have opined, it sets the two apart in very functional ways. It creates tension in the possibility of collaborative leadership in mentoring youth. Moreover, it rejects the notion that universal ethical and moral values are resident to more than one religious group. Specifically, it could delink Judaism and Christianity in dramatic ways. In their book, *The Historical Jesus, A Comprehensive Guide*, Gerd Theissen and Annette Metz shed considerable light on the subject of the history of Jesus' moral and ethical teachings as they relate to the Torah. When analyzing this topic, the authors acknowledge there is a traditional Protestant view of the Jesus who overcame Jewish legalism. However, they propose a different way of looking at this issue. To them, historically, this radical view of Jesus does not adequately consider Jesus' differentiating views of the Torah and thus unnecessarily distances him from its teachings, even ethical teachings.²⁹ The issue, they opine, lies in the relatively casual manner in which the ethics of the Torah and the ethics of Jesus have been viewed from a historical perspective when compared and contrasted. According to them:

“Alongside a relativizing of norms of the Torah, we find an accentuation of them; alongside a “liberal” generosity there is strictness which bears witness to a great

²⁹ Gerd Theissen and Annette Metz, *The Historical Jesus, A Contemporary Guide*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 349-350.

inner bond with the Torah. Therefore the first basic problem in interpreting the ethics of Jesus is how to indicate the tension between the intensification of the Torah and the relaxation of the Torah. In addition there is a second basic problem: the tension between wisdom and eschatological motivation. A wisdom ethic reckons that the world will continue to exist; and eschatological ethics expect it to change (soon). Jesus combines motifs from wisdom and eschatology in his ethics.”³⁰

Thus, one must see *wisdom ethics* as a set of ethical norms or maxims reflective of God’s wisdom in creation and which infer behavior for life in accordance with the existing creation “which were elsewhere formulated by the Torah.”³¹ Simultaneously, one must understand *eschatological ethics* as connected to the Kingdom of God and the transformation of the world. “Here the human being is confronted with a divine will which leads beyond Torah and wisdom without being fundamentally in tension with them.”³² In reality, this means that efforts to establish a Christian based mentoring program in an urban setting where various religious beliefs converge, one must be grounded in the notion that certain ethical and moral teachings may be fundamental to the Christ event, but may be found resident in other religions as well with many finding resident in the idea of a universal God. Theissen and Metz conclude their dialogue in this regard: “The tension between wisdom and eschatology could indicate that, like all Jews, Jesus centered his life on the Torah and that the wisdom and eschatological aspects formed only the framework of his ethics. The wisdom-type images drawn from creation (e.g., of the ‘lilies of the field’) and the eschatological expectations serve as motivation toward doing the will of God. But the content of the will of God arises out of the

³⁰ Theissen and Metz, 348.

³¹ Ibid., 348.

³² Ibid., 348.

interpretation of the Torah”³³ Thus, from a historical perspective, one can see a definitive link in the ethical and moral teachings of Jesus with those of the Torah.

As we shift now to mentoring as it occurred in early formation of Christianity (2nd and 3rd Century), we find the early Christian Church had begun to take shape, but by no means could it “be described as a monolithic entity.”³⁴ In these centuries, there was also a strong connection between education and mentoring. For children, it still focused on the local church. “Children generally underwent the same preparation and baptism as new converts [and] ... In all cases it was clear that the children of Christians in the early Church were considered as part of the church community from birth.”³⁵ This should not lead one to conclude, however, that early Christians were not concerned about issues of life or the attendant ethical and moral. In fact, the authors Irvin and Sunquist state: “Whether they were in Rome, Carthage, Edessa, or Nisibis, most persons who became Christians in the second and third centuries did so for local reasons. The theological debates of the day were often connected with the day-to-day concerns with which people lived. The meaning of salvation for most was focused around questions of sickness, moral life, diverse gods, or the afterlife.”³⁶ In these instances, however, it appears that mentoring of youth was still directly tied to the Church with no substantial outreach to teach moral and ethical values in the community at large. Stated another way, a youth needed to be in the church to receive those ethical and moral teachings.

³³ Ibid., 348.

³⁴ Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement, Volume I: Earliest Christianity to 1453*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 106.

³⁵ Ibid., 105.

³⁶ Irvin and Sunquist, 147.

In early writings such as the Didache, which possibly dates back to the early second century, Christian ethics were espoused. For example, in Chapter V of the Didache it states: “8. You shall not turn away the needy, but shall share everything with your brother, and shall not say that it is your own, for if you are sharers in the imperishable, how much more in the things which perish?”³⁷ An indication that the teaching of youth was a part of the early Christian value is also found in some of the very writings that speak against Christianity. In his book, *The Story of Christianity, Volume I, The Early Church To The Dawn Of The Reformation, Revised and Updated*, Justo L. Gonzalez cites such an example. To highlight the many distorted views that early society had regarding Christianity, Gonzalez cites the writing of Celsus (*The True Word*) who lived during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. In their obvious criticism of Christianity, we see glimpses of instances where children being taught from a Christian perspective. The writing states:

“In some private homes we find people who work with wool and rags, and cobblers, this is the least cultured and most ignorant kind. Before the head of the household, they dare not utter a word. But as soon as they can take the children aside or some women who are as ignorant as they are, they speak wonders...If you really wish to know the truth, leave your teachers and your father, and go with the women and the children to the women’s quarters, or to the cobbler’s shop, or to the tannery, and there you will learn the perfect life. It is thus that these Christians find those who will believe them.”³⁸

Although these writings do not make it clear what was taught, one can draw some logical conclusions based on the teachings of Jesus as accentuated by references to learning the

³⁷ John W. Coakley and Andrea Sterk, *Readings in World Christian History, Volume I: Earliest Christianity to 1453*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 14. Source: “The Didache of Teachings of the Twelve Apostles.” In *The Apostolic Fathers*, Vol. I, tr. Kirsopp Lake (London: William Heinemann, 1919, New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1919, 309-35.

³⁸ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity, Volume I, The Early Church To The Dawn Of The Reformation, revised and updated* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010), 60.

perfect life. Thus, those teachings would have necessarily included some form of instructions on Christian ethics and moral values. What appears to be evident in early Christianity is that an environment of teaching and mentoring youth by Christians was present, although it existed almost exclusively among the youth in the Church by way of their Christian parents.

While Christianity played a major role in the education and mentoring of youth in the early formation of what would become the United States of America, somewhat divergent paths were taken. These different paths were often carved out based on geographical boundaries and political and religious ideology centering on the institution of Slavery.³⁹ Some of it was based on the fact that in places like Puritan New England, “there were comparatively few slaves.”⁴⁰ This discussion will follow the ethical and moral instructions provided to early slaves and African American youth by religious slaves and African American Christian churches.

The moral and ethical training in the Antebellum South was often limited to white youth. The idea of moral and ethical training for all youth in the Antebellum South was focused around two primary issues, catechism (Christian instructions) and baptism. The issue arising was that if slaves were officially connected to the church through catechization and baptism, then it was believed by many slave owners that this necessarily created an argument that they were free. Albert Raboteau states in his book, *Slave Religion, The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South* that:

³⁹ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion, The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South*, (Oxford London: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1978), 97-117.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 108.

“Repeatedly, would-be missionaries to the slaves complained that slaveholders refused them permission to catechize their slaves because baptism made it necessary to free them. Thus it seemed that the Christian commission to preach the gospel to all nations ran directly counter to the economic interest of the Christian slave owner. Even after colonial assemblies had declared baptism to be no threat to the planter’s legal right to hold Africans in perpetual bondage, the process of religious instruction which had to precede baptism was seen by many slaveholders as an economic detriment. For a slave to be catechized adequately took time.”⁴¹

John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, in the book *From Slavery To Freedom*, provide further support for this contention by indicating that: “When the abolitionists began their crusade against slavery, planters became more cautious regarding religious activities among slaves and undertook to control them more effectively. In most states black preachers were presided over by white persons.”⁴²

More and more, slaves were required to attend the churches of their masters. Thus, the crucial Christian venue through which Christian moral and ethical values could be taught to slave children (catechization) was limited in their application to slaves. “Rather, it was the method that whites employed to keep a closer eye on their slaves.”⁴³ An additional factor appear to have been the sheer number of issues the white clergy had to deal with when teaching moral and ethical values to white youth in the Antebellum South. To make this point, Raboteau quotes Octavio Da Costa Eduardo, who stated that ministers already, “work enough from [with] the white folks on his hands,”⁴⁴ Thus, a multitude of concerns kept African slave youths from Christian education. In some cases

⁴¹ Raboteau, 98-99.

⁴² John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom, A History Of African Americans, Seventh Edition*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1994), 134-135.

⁴³ Franklin and Moss, Jr., 135.

⁴⁴ Raboteau, 99.

it was the issue of catechism and baptism, overworked ministers, and the belief that Africans were “too brutish to be instructed.”⁴⁵ In other cases, the “Slaveholders feared that Christianity would make their slaves [even children] not only proud but ungovernable and even rebellious,”⁴⁶ African slaves, including African youths, were denied Christian ethical and moral training in the white churches of the Antebellum South. Although, the Presbyterians and the Quakers generally had more liberal feelings toward blacks, the Episcopalian, Baptist and Methodist churches held different views of slavery and educating slaves. In this regard, Franklin and Moss, Jr. indicates in their book: “In the last three decades before the Civil War the church became one of the strongest allies of the proslavery element. Slaves who had found refuge and solace in the religious instructions of the white clergy had reason to believe that they were now trapped by an enemy who had once befriended them.”⁴⁷

This is not to say that no slaves received religious education in the South through white sponsored venues. Evidence shows that there were a number of instances where slave owners went against the stated policies of not teaching slaves. Apparently, there were schools in a number of places in the South that were either for African Americans or known to allow African Americans to attend. Franklin and Moss indicate: “Schools for blacks are known to have existed in Savannah, Georgia; Charleston, South Carolina; Fayetteville, New Bern, Raleigh, North Carolina; Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky; Fredericksburg and Norfolk, Virginia; and various other cities in Florida, Tennessee, and

⁴⁵ Raboteau, 99.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 103.

⁴⁷ Franklin and Moss, Jr., 136.

Louisiana.”⁴⁸ A missionary named Ebenezer Taylor provides another notable example. He was missionary to St. Andrew’s Parish, in South Carolina from 1711 to 1717 and offered measures of praise for the work that some of his parishioners had done in providing Christian instructions to slaves.⁴⁹ Raboteau quotes from Frederick Dalcho’s

Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South Carolina:

“Mr. Haige and Mrs. Edwards, who came lately to this Plantation [Carolina], have taken extra-ordinary pains to instruct a considerable number of Negroes, in the principles of the Christian Religion, and to reclaim and reform them. The wonderful success they met with, in about half a year’s time, encouraged me to go and to examine those Negroes, about their Knowledge in Christianity; they declared to me their Faith in the chief articles of our religions, which they sufficiently explained; they rehearsed by heart, very distinctly, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayers, and Ten Commandments; fourteen of them give me so great satisfaction, and were so desirous to be baptized, that I thought it my duty to do it on the last Lord’s Day. I doubt not but these Gentlewomen will prepare the rest of them for Baptism in a little time, and I hope the good example of these Gentlewomen will provide at least some Masters and Mistresses, to take the same care and pains with their poor Negroes.”⁵⁰

Thus, while one can conclude that in the Antebellum South some young African male slaves received moral and ethical teaching, it ran counter to the stated policies and in most cases it was denied by the white Christian institutions organized for such purposes. Moreover, in those cases where such teachings were accorded, it was done so with the understanding that such moral and ethical teachings did not accord the slave a measure of freedom.

⁴⁸ Franklin and Moss, Jr., 137.

⁴⁹ Raboteau, 104.

⁵⁰ Raboteau, 104. Source: Quoted by Frederick Dalcho, *An Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South Carolina* (Charleston, 1820), 336-37.

In Puritan New England and other places in the North, the attitude toward teaching slaves Christian moral and ethical values took a slightly different turn. Although, New Englanders who owned slaves valued the worth of the slave's body over the worth of their soul, the Christian community made strides in educating Slaves. In fact, "the first recorded instance of a slave's baptism [requiring catechism] in New England occurred in 1641."⁵¹ Courts in places like Massachusetts were petitioned by religious bodies to separate the issue of slavery and the teaching of moral and ethical values from the concept of slavery itself. In May of 1694, a group of ministers "petitioned the general court of Massachusetts to pass a bill denying that baptism bestowed freedom to the slaves, though there is no record that the legislature heeded their memorial."⁵² Raboteau's research also shows: "The General Assembly of the Colony of Connecticut was asked to deliberate two issues concerning baptism of slaves in 1738: first, 'whether the infant slaves of Christian masters may be baptized in their master's right, provided they suitably promise and engage to bring them up in the ways of religion'" and second, whether the masters were duty-bound to "offer such children [for baptism]" and make the aforesaid promise." The Assembly answered yes to both queries."⁵³ Similar efforts sprang up in such places as Rhode Island, New Jersey and Pennsylvania through religious groups such as Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist.⁵⁴ Some slaves, who were considered members of the family, "like Phyllis Wheatley ...were included in family prayers, Bible readings, and

⁵¹ Raboteau, 109.

⁵² Raboteau, 109.

⁵³ Raboteau, 109. Source: Richard Baxter, *Christian Directory*, quoted by Jones, p.7; *Anthenian Oracle* (1705), quoted by Lorenzo Johnston Green, *The Negro in Colonial New England* (New York: Antheneum, 1968), 267.

⁵⁴ Raboteau, 109-111.

religious instructions.⁵⁵ Groups like the Society for the Propaganda of the Gospel (S.P.G.) thought that religious instructions should include education as well and sought to open school in the north and south to catechize and educate slave teenagers. “In 1742, the S.P.G. purchased two black teenagers, aged fourteen and fifteen, to be trained as teachers...In 1746 Garden informed the society that the school had already trained twenty-eight children and was at that time instructing fifty-five more children during the day and fifteen adults in the evenings. The type of education offered can be inferred from Garden’s request to the society for the following books: “100 Spelling Books, 50 Testaments, 50 Bibles, and 50 Psalters with Common Prayer.”

While there were some efforts through mainline religious groups to teach moral and ethical values to slaves during this period, Raboteau’s *Invisible Institution* provides a clearer picture of how religious moral and ethical values were taught to slaves. This invisible institution was really not invisible to the slaves and it was anti-thematic. It was held in tension with the ethical and moral teachings as acted out by slave owners and white Christian institutions who taught it. It formed a basis for a Christian life that would not only shaped their religious views but provided the socio-political framework for teachings of moral and ethical values used as a defense against the institution of slavery that held them captive. In much the same way that Rickie Moore links the prophets of Israel as mentors in such teachings as the Passover, the slaves acted as mentor, teaching ethical and moral values in the religious secret places that they created for themselves. In this regard, Raboteau states: “The religious meetings [of the slaves] in quarters, groves, and “hush harbors” were themselves frequently acts of rebellion against the proscription

⁵⁵ Ibid., 109.

of the master. In the context of divine authority, the limited authority of any human was placed in perspective. By obeying the commands of God, even when they contradicted the commands of men, slaves developed a sense of *moral* superiority and actual *moral authority* over their masters.”⁵⁶ This moral and ethical teaching uplifted the spirit of those in bondage by pointing to the *incorrect* moral and ethical values of those who held them in bondage. A classic example lies in that of the David Walker Appeal. Written first as a series of articles, it was later integrated into a complete volume. In Article III, Walker goes to the heart of how the distorted morals and ethics of white religion during slavery caused non-Christian, particularly slave owners to absolve themselves of any guilt.

Walker says:

“I have known pretended preachers of the gospel of my Master, who not only held us as their natural inheritance, but treated us with as much rigor as any Infidel or Deist in the world – just as though they were intent only on taking our blood and groans to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. The wicked and ungodly, seeing their preachers treat us with so much cruelty, they say: our preachers, who must be right, if any body are, treat them like brutes, and why cannot we? – They think it is no harm to keep them in slavery and put the whip to them, and why cannot we do the same! – They being preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, if it were any harm, they would surely preach against their oppression and do their utmost to erase it from the country;”

The slaves’ strong belief in God for deliverance and the moral and ethical consequences of teachings in the “hush harbors” would eventually develop into the African American Christian church which as Raboteau concludes as being: “the one institution which freed blacks were allowed to control, the church was the center of social

⁵⁶ Raboteau, 318.

economic, educational, and political activity, it was also a source of continuity and identify for the black community.”⁵⁷

As we shift to post slavery efforts at teaching Christian moral and ethical values to youth, venues are opened for African American Christian organizations on many fronts. In her book, *Righteous Discontent*, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham chronicles the Women’s movement in the Black Baptist Church from the period 1880-1920 and shows how this movement, led by women, helped to shape the notion of *the politics of respectability*.⁵⁸ This concept went to the heart of the idea of the church teaching moral and ethical values to former slaves, especially young teens. Higginbotham expounds by indicating: “The politics of respectability emphasized reform of individual behavior and attitudes both as a goal in itself and as a strategy for reform of the entire structural system of American race relations.”⁵⁹

The effort at emphasizing moral and ethical values among young African American men was crucial. It came at a time when white society was demonizing, caricaturing and stereotyping African American men as violent and brutish. Similar analogies can be drawn in today’s urban setting where this project takes place. The *technologies of power* have left cause to abandon the young urban African American male because he is often stereotyped as violent and brutish now as then. Higginbotham continues her discourse on why the *politics of respectability* was crucial during the early

⁵⁷ Raboteau, 320.

⁵⁸ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent, The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1993), 185.

⁵⁹ Raboteau, 187.

years between 1880 and 1920 by indicating: “For example, the film epic *Birth of a Nation*, which was inspired by Thomas Dixon’s novel *The Clansman*, demonized blacks by juxtaposing images of rapacious, brutish black men alongside delicate, chaste white women. With unseemly vividness the newly burgeoning film industry incited and perpetuated popular myths that equated black men with rapist.”⁶⁰

Thus, for the Baptist Women’s movement that Higginbotham chronicles, the emphasis on respectable behavior was designed to alter the thinking of whites about African Americans and African Americans about themselves. This was particularly crucial for young African American males. As it relates to the teaching of Christian morals and ethics, Higginbotham states that, “The politics of respectability tapped into Christian teachings that exalted the poor and the oppressed over the rich and powerful.”⁶¹ Perhaps equally important is that the idea of respectability as grounded in Christian moral and ethical teachings “functioned as a ‘bridge discourse’ that mediated relations between black and white reformers.”⁶² The ability to establish a bridge discourse is one of the key issues facing young disadvantage African American males in urban settings. If the power of the media continuously shows young African American males in violent and negative situations, it can sway even Christian churches to become less involved in teaching and mentoring, considering them a lost cause. One of the benefits one hopes to derive from this project is the ability to establish a ‘bridge discourse’ for these young boys through training in Christian morals and ethics. Through this venue, a new dialogue will begin on

⁶⁰ Higginbotham, 189.

⁶¹ Higginbotham, 191.

⁶² Higginbotham, 197. Source: Fraser, *Unruly Practices*, 174.

how to address issues of the young African American male in urban settings, especially in the poor and disadvantage areas.

From a historical perspective the African American church has traditionally accepted a role in the civic and social responsibility of the surrounding community.

Henry H. Mitchell in his book *Black Church Beginnings, The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years*, supports this assertion when he states that:

“The African American belief system supporting the ready reception of responsibility for the needy was traceable to ethnic and religious roots, as opposed to popular social theories. The call to which they responded was from the church as extended family. The common pattern of using familial titles such as brother and sister came from ethnic roots in those same extended family communities in Africa. There they had no formal titles like mister; everybody was a relative, near or distant. Indeed, all the anti-slavery activity and other crusades were based, ultimately, on deep-seated belief in justice, going back to both African and Christian roots.”⁶³

As African American Christian churches grew, especially in the 1800s, the positive effects of the church’s engagement in teaching Christian morals and ethics emerged. For example, in his book, Henry H. Mitchell cites the work of Thomas W. Higginson in regards to African American soldiers during that time. In parts he says: “Higginson also believed the African American soldiers’ amazingly good manners and habit of deference came at least in part from ‘their strongly religious temperament.’ This would also account for a refusal to be vengeful and less than professionally with formerly cruel masters. One of Higginson’s ‘best sergeants pointed out to me the very place where one of his brothers had been hanged by the whites...He spoke of it as a historic matter...’

⁶³ Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings, The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Year*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2004), 137.

They literally referred to themselves as ‘the gospel army.’⁶⁴ While white Christian organizations sponsored colleges such as Fisk University, Howard University and Hampton Institute which played a vital role in moral and ethical training, so did the African American churches beginning with those established by the African American Methodist church at the High School and collegiate level.⁶⁵ These Schools includes such ones as Pettey High School, South Carolina; Greenville Tennessee High School; Ashley County High School; Atkinson College, Madisonville, Kentucky; Jones University in Tuscaloosa, Alabama; and the Hartwell Institute in Georgia.⁶⁶ These schools only represent a very small portion of the Christian effort that ensued and lead the way toward educating African American youth and in teaching Christian moral and ethical values.

The value of these historical accounts outlines a need for a continued engagement and perhaps a new dialogue for teaching Christian moral and ethical values to African American youth in general, and African American young males in particular. Dr. Cheryl J. Sanders in her book, *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People, A Path to African American Social Transformation*, outlines an approach and a new dialogue that is particularly appropriate for teaching young African American males.⁶⁷ Her phrase for this *new* conversation is *remoralization*, which goes to the heart of intra-group social responsibility and African American moral leadership in addressing the issues of African

⁶⁴ Mitchell, 135. Source: Thomas W. Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), pp. 249-50; 254.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 157.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 157.

⁶⁷ Cheryl L. Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics For A Liberated People, A Path to African American Social Transformation*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 95-113.

Americans, particularly those of young African American males.⁶⁸ For Dr. Sanders, the phrase *remoralization* is an effort rooted in Christian morals and ethics discourse that seek to restore a sense of value that is in direct contradiction to the demoralized images often portrayed and played out in the media.⁶⁹ For her, the Rodney King beating by white police officers in Los Angeles and the tragedy of the trial that acquitted the police officers of that brutality is diabolical in its essence.⁷⁰ She opines that while Rodney King was wronged, she asks the relevant question: “Is it anyone’s responsibility to reach out to Rodney King and invite him into ethical dialogue, or even alter his antisocial behavior? Who can lead Rodney King? What, if any, impact can African American male ethical leadership has upon the moral empowerment of Rodney King and other like him?”⁷¹

The task of *remoralization* for Sanders lie in the very definition that she gives it. In its origin, it is universal, in its application, it is very much Christian. For her, to *remoralize* is to: “1. To restore to a morally sound condition: *The prayer habit remoralizes those who embrace it.* 2. To strengthen the spirit, courage and discipline and stay power: *Love and acceptance remoralizes the men in the single fathers’ support group.* 3. To enable creative problem-solving through restoration of mental clarity and order: *The adult mentor’s close supervision remoralizes the adolescent.*”⁷² Sanders strong belief in the power of *remoralization* emphasizes the need for more focused

⁶⁸ Sanders, 95-113.

⁶⁹ Sanders, 102.

⁷⁰ Sanders, 101-102.

⁷¹ Ibid., 103.

⁷² Ibid., 104-105.

mentoring for young African American males, particularly those who are disenfranchised and resident to poverty and social alienation. She states: “Whether or not one is fully persuaded by the remoralization paradigm, the church must offer some sort of transformative paradigm if it is to take the lead in building a community where men who behave like Rodney King can be reconciled with men who think like Martin King.”⁷³

The Sanders discourse raises historical and present day insights into a path that gets to the heart of collaborative leadership. While Christian ethics and values can be espoused in a Christian based mentoring program for the community of young African American males, to be effective, it must be done in an environment that is both inclusive in regards to its audience and collaborative in terms of its application. Stated another way, while the goal of a Christian based mentoring program is to impart ethical and moral principles focused on the Christ event, it cannot focus on traditional dogmatic jargon. As evidence, Sanders offers the case of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcolm X) as an example of one whose moral and ethical transformation stands as a key example for young African American males even though he was neither middle class nor Christian.⁷⁴ She goes on to say that: “While it is doubtful that the majority of persons sporting the “X” logo are drawn to the ascetic lifestyle and religious commitment that Shabazz embodied as a Muslim minister, it seems that they readily connect with the mystique of a man who made a dramatic transformation from a life of poverty and crime to become a great moral, religious, and cultural leader.”⁷⁵

⁷³ Sanders, 109.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 109.

⁷⁵ Sanders, 109.

So from a historical and prospective view, what does Sanders insight and discourse provide for the Christian engagement in teaching moral and ethical values in a community based environment? This question is more complex than originally envisioned, and raises issues that go to the fundamental issue of Christian evangelism. Can Christian dialogue be spoken in a religious collaborative environment? Can Christianity's view of *saving the world* be successfully juxtaposed to a collaborative model seeking available resources to empower young African American males to live a moral life, though some may never become Christians? Perhaps these questions are more relevant as guideposts rather than to provide a specific formula. Nevertheless, Sanders opines that: "It seems evident that if African American Christian males are going to build community with people who resemble Rodney King more than Martin King, then they are going to have to develop paradigms that emphasize testimony, outreach, and spiritual nurture rather than speeches, marches, and political rhetoric."⁷⁶ Sanders concludes her discourse by poignantly stating:

"Shabazz's role was to convince black people to love themselves and to love God, and it would seem that this is a viable starting point for ethical discourse and action within African American churches who are positioned to seek and stimulate dialogue with other racial and religious groups engaged in the quest for the beloved community. If modern Christians are unwilling to return to the "old time religions," let them at least invite attention to the paradigm of finding salvation, that is, to affirm, embody, teach and preach the experience expressed in the words of one of the most popular songs that the African American religious tradition has borrowed from nineteenth-century European hymnody: *I once was lost, but now [I am] found, was blind, but now I see.*"⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Sanders, 110-111.

⁷⁷ Sanders, 111.

In their book *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, chronicles the growth of the African American churches during the great migrations from 1925 to 1950 and its impact on the socio-economic backdrop of the African American culture.⁷⁸ In doing so, they indicate that: “Perhaps one of the important functions that black churches performed for young people was to provide a place where they could meet older adults, men and women, who could serve as role models for them. Much of the socialization for children and youth occur through the process of role modeling - - observing, evaluating, emulating, and filing as way for later use the behavior, examples, and values of others.”⁷⁹ The relevant question is - has this type of involvement from the African American Christian church declined and lack connectivity with its community? It is void of what theologians like James H. Cone would term Liberation Theology. James Cone sees an inextricable link between what he calls “God talk” and its impact on the uplifting of the poor and disadvantage. In fact, he opines that one cannot exist without the other.⁸⁰ It is a crucial historical question because if African American Christian churches, particularly in urban areas of the United States, do not effectively mentor young males, the problems they [the church and young African American males] encounter will be exacerbated. The need for the African American Christian church to continue its historical engagement with the youth of the community at large is crucial because “a major challenge to the Black Church concerns a growing sector of unchurched African American youth, largely teenage and young adult African

⁷⁸Lincoln, C. Eric and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1965), 119-163.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 312-313.

⁸⁰ James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, ed., *Black Theology, a documentary history, Volume one: 19-1979, Second Edition, Revised*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 109.

American males from the underclass, who are located in northern and western urban centers.”⁸¹ Moreover, a “common experience for many African American teens and young adults, especially males, is imprisonment. Nationally, the incarceration rate of black men has averaged between forty six percent to forty eight percent in the 1980.”⁸²

In some regard, this question is answered by the data that Lincoln and Mamiya provided in their study. Their results show that over 67.9 per cent of the 1,459 urban and rural churches polled had some kind of involvement in community outreach programs and that 18.8 per cent of those programs were focused on some form of instructional related activities related to Christian moral and ethical values.⁸³ More specifically, their research showed that: “Black churches and clergy, on the whole, were much more supportive of community outreach programs, thus undermining once more the stereotype of the Black Church as a withdrawn, insular, and private institution.”⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the study does not paint a completely glowing picture of the African American church in terms of its efforts to teach ethical and moral values to young African American males in the community. Though a small, but growing number, the outreach efforts in this regard has been shallow. In this regard, Lincoln and Mamiya conclude the following in their study: “While black churches are still the central institution in their communities, some cracks have begun to appear at the edges of the religious stronghold. Despite the universal claims of the Black Church for the whole community, there has always been a

⁸¹ Lincoln and Mamiya, 322.

⁸² Lincoln and Mamiya, 323.

⁸³ Lincoln and Mamiya, 150.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 150.

small sector of unchurched black people. Mostly they were younger black males or other maverick types determined to resist the powerful social control of black churches in the small rural towns and in urban areas...”⁸⁵

Biblical Foundation

Old Testament

From the onset it should be noted that proper interpretations of the books of I Samuel 19:4-6 as well as the whole of the books of I and II Samuel, are not without debate. This is due in part to a number of factors. One issue is the problem of unintelligible portions of some parts of the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) which were corrupted in translation leaving “peculiar and often unintelligible spellings and grammatical forms.”⁸⁶ An additional factor is that the Septuagint Text (LXX) has been used historically to amend or fill in where MT is corrupt, even though it is a translation itself and is subject to the same kind of textual corruption as the MT.⁸⁷ The problem is exacerbated when one considers that the LXX is more consistent with the Qumran Biblical Scrolls which appear to be more aligned with the LXX than the Hebrew MT.⁸⁸ Perhaps a larger and emerging issue is that of *historiography*, or the manner in which history is written “rather what actually happened (i.e., historicity).”⁸⁹ This idea questions

⁸⁵ Ibid., 160.

⁸⁶ David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 2-3.

⁸⁷ Tsumura, 7.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁸⁹ Tsumura, 24.

the existence of events written in the Bible without independent verifiable accounts stated in other historical documents. Though this approach to interpretation still exists, findings as early as 1993 provide some independent account of the existence of David that is chronicled in I Samuel 19:4-8. Research shows “A late 9th Century Aramaic inscription was discovered at Tel Dan containing the phrase *bytdwd*,⁹⁰ which could be interpreted as the *House of David*.

Debate in this regard will probably continue as long as Biblical interpreters lack complete and intelligible information providing absolute verification. What is critical, however, is to gain an understanding of how the community of believers regarded the referenced text. The key theme arising out of I Samuel 19:4-6 is *relationship*. This pericope chronicles the actions taken by the Biblical characters Jonathan and David that is grounded in a *covenant* relationship tied to specific commitment. A *covenant* among the community during this time was seen as “an agreement enacted between two parties in which one or both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance.”⁹¹ To understand the true impact of the dialogue that occurs in I Samuel 19:4-6, one must consider the scope and effect of the *covenant* relationship that was established. It has been noted by one author that: “The two had formed a pack of friendship, solemnized by a covenant ritual. Abraham had given animals to Abimelech (Genesis 21:27) in pledge of his faith, so Jonathan gave David his robe and armor. This

⁹⁰ Ibid., 25.

⁹¹ David Noel Freeman, ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Volume 1, A-C*. (New York, London Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 1992), 1179.

did more than bind them as equals; it symbolized Jonathan's support of David's right to the throne."⁹²

Though David was inferior in status to Jonathan and should have been the one protecting him, Jonathan protects David even though David will one day become King of Israel instead of him.⁹³ Thus, the nature and extent of the relationship that Jonathan and David share is deep and runs against the norms of the relationship that they should have based on their respective status (Jonathan a Prince and David a servant). Although not specifically stated, it would be an intelligent assumption that Jonathan, in particular, acted on the commitments made in this *covenant* when speaking to his father on behalf of David. In many of the teenage gangs or crews in the neighborhood where this project is situated, the expectation is that a member will give his support whether the intended actions are good or bad. The Jonathan and David model, however, provide a glimpse of the kind of relationship that could be possible if Christian moral and ethical principles could be learned and applied. That is to say that they could provide a basis for these young boys to act counter to the expected norms in their environment.

Although it is not stated in most text, the general consensus is that based on I Samuel 19:3, the events in I Samuel 19:4 occur the very next day.⁹⁴ Some translations have actually added in phrases to make the connection more apparent, such as in the CEV

⁹² William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey, The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament, Second Edition*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 177.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

⁹⁴ Roger L Omanson and John E. Ellington, *A Handbook On The First and Second Books of Samuel, Volume 1: I Samuel 1.1 to 2 Samuel 1.27*, (New York: United Bible Societies, 2001), 411.

which added the phrase “The next morning.”⁹⁵ This bond and the attendant commitments were so powerful that Jonathan, in this particular text, now publically speaks well of David in the midst of his father’s plot to kill his friend (I Samuel 19:4-5). In verse 19:4, Jonathan carefully addresses his father in making his appeal to spare David’s life. Peter D. Miscall indicates that Jonathan, even though he is Saul’s son, begins by using the third person, as the appropriate mode of address to a king.⁹⁶ Miscall further states that the author McCarter omits, *the Lord* (I Samuel 19:5) in order to associate the victory more directly with David.⁹⁷ However, Miscall sees no advantage to this particular rendering of the texts since “Yahweh’s operating through David would be the strongest argument in his defense (cf. 14:45).”⁹⁸

Although Jonathan does not initially know what the outcome of his appeal to his father will be, he is, nevertheless, compelled to render it because of his *covenant* bond to David. The phrase “for he took his life in his hand (I Samuel 19:5) is “An idiom which has passed into English. It means to place one’s life in an exposed position, i.e., to expose oneself to great danger, to take big risks.”⁹⁹ However, a closer look at the understanding of Kingship from an Israelite perspective during the monarchy rule could lead us to a conclusion that Jonathan knew exactly what he was doing in his appeal to Saul’s Kingship. In the sense that the community of the times understood the language Jonathan

⁹⁵ Ibid., 411.

⁹⁶ Peter D. Miscall, *I Samuel: A Literary Reading*, (United States of America: Peter D. Miscall, 1986), 163.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 163.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 163.

⁹⁹ William McKane, *I&II Samuel, Introduction and Commentary*, (London; SCM Press LTD, 1963), 120.

used (*to do good*) it may well have had overtones of the expectations of parties to political treaties. In this sense, David honored Saul as King in that his actions were for the good of Saul and Israel. Thus, Jonathan's appeal was also most akin to the reciprocal respect accorded by a King to one of his servants who does well for him.¹⁰⁰ There is also an underlying ethical theme resident in this pericope that is grounded in the Hebrew understanding of what it meant to be ethical. The corpus of Hebrew ethics is found in the Pentateuch. Although English translations have rendered the term Torah to mean Law, it was based originally on the idea that teaching, instructions and directions were to be acted out in adult lives so that children could emulate.¹⁰¹ Thus, one could conclude that Jonathan's appeal was grounded in his sage understanding of the obligatory actions of a King to a servant who does well for him and his understanding of Saul's obligation to act out certain ethical principles through *example*. Jonathan seizes the moment to intervene with Saul because Saul is still a man of reason at this point.¹⁰² Jonathan's persuasive speech convinces his father, who is also King of Israel, to swear that "As the Lord lives, he [David] shall not be put to death" (I Samuel 19:6b). In the King James Version rendering of the text, the word "*sin*" is used three times in Jonathan's appeal (I Samuel 19:4-5). The author Robert P. Gordon indicates that: "such issues [*sin and innocent blood*], have not been raised since chapter 15; they will be raised again in the encounter

¹⁰⁰ P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *The Anchor Bible, I Samuel, A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1980), 322.

¹⁰¹ David Noel Freedman, Ed. *Anchor Bible, Volume 2, D-G*. (New York, London, Toronto Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 1992), 645.

¹⁰² Miscall, 163.

between David and Jonathan in chapter 20. Nevertheless, the issue of “sin” is not developed in either place;”¹⁰³

The application of this text to the contextual issues faced by young teenage males in the Brentwood neighborhood of Washington, D.C. may appear to be totally unrelated. In reality, many of them have already established what they would consider *covenant* relationships, though negative. The harsh realities of gang or crew life, for example, require bonds that are so tight that one is willing to die for another. More often a concept of *familia* is formed. The actions taken by Jonathan in I Samuel 19:4-6 demonstrate a pattern of behavior that is outside the normal expectation for someone in his position. If young males in Brentwood could be taught a set of Christian moral and ethical principles based on a *covenant bond* that respects humanity as God’s creation, for example, rather than relationships nurtured in greed and violence, they will have a knowledge base that is counter to their expected behavior. The idea of the Christian based mentoring program is to focus on providing knowledge that will help remoralize their views.

The author Saul M. Olyan argues that the covenant relationship established between Jonathan and David is most likely akin to the concept of Western Asian covenant relationship which requires honor and love as part of the relationship as well as shame.¹⁰⁴ Under the rubric of love, honor and shame, the expectation was that: “to honor a treaty partner, confirms publicly the strength of existing covenant bonds; to diminish or

¹⁰³ Robert P. Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel, A Commentary: Lectures in Divinity, University of Cambridge* (Exeter, Devon: The Paternoster Press, 1986), 126.

¹⁰⁴ Saul M. Olyan, “*Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relationships In Israel and its Environment*,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 115/2 (1996), 204.

shame one who is loyal in covenant communicates at minimum a loss of status and may in fact constitute a covenant violation.”¹⁰⁵

Thus, it could be said that Jonathan’s relationship with David was grounded in both Biblical and cultural descriptors acted out through covenant commitment and love.¹⁰⁶ The notion that Jonathan speaks up for his friend against his own father out of covenant relationship, points to the possibility of creating positive decision-making descriptors for young males in the Brentwood neighborhood, based in principles of *right* and *wrong* that are not motivated by peer pressure.¹⁰⁷ Some authors have suggested that Jonathan and David’s relationship may have also been homosexual or at least homoerotic,¹⁰⁸ leading to a conclusion that Jonathan’s rush to defend his friend may have been based on his homosexual or homoerotic feelings for David rather than in their covenant bond toward each other. However, there is nothing in the language that would cause one to reach that as a definite conclusion. Moreover, authors like Markus Zehnder reached different conclusion after conducting a thorough study that focused “mainly on textual and linguistic observations, but historical, sociological, and psychological aspects are also addressed.”¹⁰⁹ In his article, he indicates that: “The narrative of David’s ascent to power does not provide, clear, unambiguous indications of a sexual component in the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 204-205.

¹⁰⁶ F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, (Cambridge, MA; Harvard University Press, 1973), 268-269.

¹⁰⁷ Jack Mizerow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 44.

¹⁰⁸ Saul M. Olyan, *Surpassing The Love of Women, in Authorizing Marriage* (Princeton: Princeton Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁹ Markus Zehnder, “Biblical Studies: Observations on the Relationship Between David and Jonathan and the Debate On Homosexuality”, (WTJ 69, December 2007): 127-74,).

relationship between the two men, nor are the Song of Songs or possible ancient descriptions of homoerotic relationships strong enough to allow for the suggestion of sexual connotations in the David-Jonathan Stories.”¹¹⁰ He continues by indicating that the *termini technici* used in the Hebrew Bible are missing descriptors of David and Jonathan’s relationship rendering it as not kindred.¹¹¹ He concludes that it is the theological and political aspects of their relationship that are more often borne out as demonstrated in the literary contexts of the books of Samuel and Kings and in examples of typical treaties from the ancient Near East.¹¹²

Some scholars have also argued that the story told in 1 Samuel 19 is the same as the one in 1 Samuel 20. James D. Newsome, Jr., however, argues that these stories are in fact different ones and can be validated by the different outcomes in each of them.¹¹³ Although other parts of this text are difficult to exegete, one factor clearly emerges. The bond of friendship between Jonathan and David is strong enough to withstand the coming crisis of Saul now publicly expressing his desire to kill David.¹¹⁴ There also appears to be some measure of inconsistency about how David gets the attention of the Royal Palace. One scholar indicates that, “In one account (I Samuel 16:14-25) David is summoned as a

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 173.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 174.

¹¹² Zehnder, 173-174.

¹¹³ James D. Newsome, Jr., *1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, Knox Preaching Guides*, (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 63.

¹¹⁴ Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel, A Commentary*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), 163.

musician to cheer the depressed Saul; in the other (1 Samuel 17:1-18:5) he first wins the king's attention by defeating Goliath."¹¹⁵

Although it is clear that some issues in the Jonathan and David story are ambiguous, it is also clear that Jonathan proffers a concise argument that wins over Saul for the moment and prevents harm from coming to his friend.¹¹⁶ Jonathan invokes the name of the Lord, *Adonai*, before Saul in describing David's victory and reminds Saul how even he had rejoiced in the victory that David wrought for Israel against the Philistines (1 Samuel 19:5). Saul then swears in the name of the Lord (*Adonai*) that he would not kill David (1 Samuel 19:6).¹¹⁷ By this time in Hebrew history *Adonai* was the term used to speak of the unmentionable, vowel-less tetragrammaton YHWH.¹¹⁸ What is significant in this regard is that Saul lacked sincerity to do all he could do to keep the vow he swore in the name of the Lord, even though as King of Israel he had the power to do so. According to the Law of Moses when one makes a vow to the Lord, it must be honored to the word (Numbers 30:1-2). It has been said that "these words establish the lawfulness of vows, define their character, and declare their inviolableness."¹¹⁹ Certainly, the saga of Saul and David demonstrate that the vow Saul made in this pericope was far from unbreakable. Given the subsequent attempts by Saul to kill David, one could

¹¹⁵ Bernhard W. Anderson and Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, *Understanding The Old Testament*, 4th Edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1998), 201.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.. 164.

¹¹⁷ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary, Old Testament*, (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 6031.

¹¹⁸ Hayim Baltan, *Webster's New World Hebrew Dictionary*, (Cleveland, Ohio: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 1992), 645.

¹¹⁹ Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services, Updated Edition* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 294.

reasonably conclude that his vow was not a sacred one. Conversely, Jonathan and David remained faithful to their vows even when adversities could have easily broken them. Moreover, one could reasonably conclude that Jonathan's appeal in I Samuel 19:4 was consistent with those vows.

Jonathan's appeal provides temporary reconciliation and Saul's vow appears to bring peace in the matter for the moment.¹²⁰ Saul "guarantees David's life with an oath, and the reconciliation [between David and Saul] takes place without any special action."¹²¹ What made Jonathan's efforts so admirable is that his words were spoken not just against an impulsive action by his father Saul, but he interceded against a cold calculated plot which involved a number of supporting cast in Saul's employ.¹²² David Payne, in his commentary, indicated the following in this regard: "David could do little to protect himself against a stab in the back from any courtier who wanted to ingratiate himself with the king. It was Jonathan's loyalty and willingness to take firm action which saved David this time."¹²³ In point of fact, Jonathan and David's relationship had deep significant meaning. One commentary states: "The two had formed a relationship, solemnized by a covenant ritual. As Abraham had given animals to Abimelech (Genesis 21:27ff) in pledge

¹²⁰ Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments, Volume One, Part Two, Joshua-Esther*, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 2002), 237-238.

¹²¹ Hertzberg, 164.

¹²² David F. Payne, *I and II Samuel*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), 100-101.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

of his faith, so Jonathan gave David his robe and armor. This did more than bind them as equals; it symbolized Jonathan's support of David's right to the throne."¹²⁴

The story of Jonathan intervening for David offers some possibilities for a Christian based mentoring program for the young boys in Ward 5. If through Christian based mentoring, young males in Ward 5, could learn to stop ingratiating themselves to gangs and *crews* by committing violent crimes, and establish and honor covenant relationship, they could alienate themselves from negative behavior. They could then begin to learn to make decisions that are protective of the covenant relationship they build with members of their own community. Over time, Saul's life along with Jonathan would tragically end "in a great battle on Mount Bilbao in the center of the country."¹²⁵ Saul's life and lifestyle in some ways is a replica of many of the issues that force violent behavior among young males in Ward 5. They perceive others as threats to their territory and violently plot with others to harm or attempt to murder them. It is ironic that these youth attach a sense of righteousness when they engage in violent behavior to destroy someone they view as an enemy, or when they plot with other crew members or associates to do the same. These violent actions, based on decisions made without true *meaning perspectives*, only generate more violence as the cycle continues. Their actions are often viewed as righteous retaliation. In the Deuteronomist's sense, Saul is captured by this same sense of prophetic righteousness. Saul seeks prophesy and prophetic utterances, yet sees no guilt associated with his plots to kill David. Conversely, David avoids seeking

¹²⁴ William Sanford Lasor, David Allan Hubbard and Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey, The Message, Form and Background of the Old Testament, 2nd Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 177.

¹²⁵ Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament, An Introduction* (New York, N.Y., Mahwah, N.J.; Paulist Press, 1984), 230.

out prophets and prophetic utterance except for the one encounter where he was “rewarded with incorrect advice (2 Samuel 7:2-3).”¹²⁶ The author Robert Polzin suggest, that “the rule for the books of Samuel is this: whereas it is God who seeks out David through the *prophet*, it is rather Saul who seeks out God through the *prophet*. Could it be that, for the Deuteronomist, God appropriately takes the initiative with prophets, but humans should not?”¹²⁷

Biblical Foundation

New Testament

By way of background, the letter of the Apostle Paul to Titus is a part of what is referred to as the Pastoral Epistles (PE) which is comprised of the Letters of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus. While Titus 1:4-8 is the New Testament pericope, to understand its full implication, some background is appropriate. In the Pastorals, “the most obvious feature of these letters is that they are largely given over to ethical teachings.”¹²⁸ This gives rise to the question of whether “theology is merely incidental to the ethical interest of these epistles.”¹²⁹ The Pastorals have been said to “sanction a view of family life and

¹²⁶ Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist, A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History, Part Two, 1 Samuel*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1989), 184.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹²⁸ Frances Young, *New Testament Theology: The Theology of the Pastoral Letters*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), 24.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

mandate hierarchical social ideals that many interpreters of scripture, themselves informed by God's revelation, find confrontational and alien."¹³⁰

The absence of a heavy focus on Pauline doctrine in the Pastorals has also given rise to questions regarding their authenticity as Pauline writings. Conversely, there are those who do not reject Paul's letter to Titus as an authentic Pauline writing, but find daunting, the hermeneutical challenge of accepting "the literal, universal applicability of all the propositions contained in them."¹³¹ Nevertheless, what is crucial about the Pastorals, including Titus, is that they "reflect what will become increasingly characteristic of Christianity in the 2nd through the 4th centuries: an ever-sharpening insistence on orthodoxy (correct faith content), combined with orthopraxy (correct behavior)."¹³²

Congruent issues lay in the questions, how did the community of believers, during this time, understand the Scripture? What impact did it have on their daily Christian lives? In other words, what did they expect from an Epistle such as Titus? In this regard, the author Jerome D. Quinn indicates that: "when the ancient Christians began to read a letter "To Titus" or "To Timothy" they expected in virtue of the epistolary form to hear (or overhear) a Pauline conversation in writing, to receive an icon of the apostle's soul and a convincing characterization that conveyed his heartfelt personal care as well as his

¹³⁰ Mark Harding, *What Are They Saying About The Pastoral Epistles*, (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2001), 107.

¹³¹ Harding, 108.

¹³² Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction To The New Testament*, (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 1997), 649-650.

teaching, directives and requests.”¹³³ Quinn continues his analysis by presupposing that “Titus and Timothy in the PE are less actual historical individuals than paradigmatic persons, models with which the new public is expected to identify.”¹³⁴ In this regard he states:

“Other recent studies have more closely specified the paraenetic – in other words, hortatory – character of the PE as the ancient world understood paraenesis (Perdue, ‘Paraenesis’) - namely, as traditional ethical exhortation, universally applicable to individual persons, addressed to an audience that is paradigmatic and typical rather than genuinely individual and historical, and often an admonition that does not envision or admit contradiction (Quinn, ‘Paraenesis/Settings’). Such letters expect not answers but action from the recipient.”¹³⁵

Whether paradigmatic or individual and specific is an issue of debate. What is true is that in this pericope, the writer Paul infuses moral and ethical behavior expectations in the equation for selecting leaders in the church (Titus 1:6-8).

This backdrop may help to better explain this pericope. According to the scripture text, the Apostle Paul leaves Titus behind in Crete to “put in order that which remains to be done” (Titus 1:5). The logical question at this juncture is what is it that remains to be done? Since Titus was known for his practical administration, and had served Paul in prior difficult situations such as in Corinthians, one crucial task would be that of organizing the church at Crete.¹³⁶ However, for Paul to refocus his commission to that of

¹³³ Jerome D. Quinn, *The Anchor Bible, The Letter To Titus, A New Translation with Notes and Commentary and An Introduction to Titus, I and II Timothy, The Pastoral Epistle*, (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), 7.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹³⁶ William Barclay, *The letters to Timothy and Titus: Second Edition*, (Philadelphia, Pa: The Westminster Press, 1960), 232-233.

simply organizing the Church would appear to deny the efficacy of his Apostleship to the Gentile world and his teachings. It is true that in his book, *The Pastoral Epistles, First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, Benjamin Fiore (Sacra Pagina) indicates that “the solution on Crete is a structural change in church organization with the introduction of elders/overseers.”¹³⁷ Nevertheless, Fiore concludes that there is clear evidence in the text to show that Titus was expected to be an example or model himself – one whose behavior demonstrates a behavior that would guide others in exemplary living.¹³⁸ A more thorough examination of the pericope, also suggest that the mission left for Titus was to link the organization of the church with leaders who could serve as examples for the Cretans. In this regard, the notion of *example* plays an important role, especially in Titus. In his earlier writings, *The Function of Personal Example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles*, Benjamin Fiore, indicates that, “The letter to Titus connects the conduct of various members of the community with the way the Christian message has received.”¹³⁹ This was then and is now, a crucial link pin to ensuring the credibility of that which is taught. If one cannot become a mentor who models behavior that is taught, it would suggest a lack of total effect. Fiore concludes his point by saying that, “The example of one’s own life and adherence to what is taught gives authenticity to the positive teachings and criticism of others failings.”¹⁴⁰ With this in mind, one can understand why Paul places heavy emphasis on the personal characteristics of those to be appointed to office (Titus

¹³⁷ Benjamin Fiore, Sacra Pagina Series, Volume 12, *The Pastoral Epistles, First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2007), 197.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹³⁹ Benjamin Fiore, *The Function of Personal Example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles*, (Rome, Italy: Biblical Institute Press, 1986), 212.

¹⁴⁰ Fiore, 213.

1:6-8). Undoubtedly, he sees exponential growth of the Gospel in the Cretan community if correct teaching can be demonstrated by correct practice.

If the notion of *example* was to be an important cornerstone of Titus' engagement at Crete, it begs the question why? Does not the power of God's Word stand on its own regardless of contrary human actions? Perhaps the answer to the "why" is as much *Missouri* as it is theological. The term *Missouri* when used in this context refers to the quip attributed to the State of Missouri as the "show me" State, indicating a preference for demonstration rather than mere claim. For most humans, greater emphasis is placed on the efficacy of that espoused when evidence is shown that it has transformed the narrator to its tenets. This is especially true for a nation of people as notorious as the Cretans were portrayed. Biblical account place Cretans at Pentecost as some of the first to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:11). Nevertheless, the message was probably not well ingrained in the Cretan psyche.¹⁴¹ The Cretans were noted liars of such that the Greeks coined a special verb for lying – *to Cretize*.¹⁴² E.F. Scott says that "The Cretans were notoriously inclined to turbulence, and this was probably in the writer's mind when he laid this stress on the duty of civic discipline."¹⁴³ I. Howard Marshall describes Cretans by saying, "they were notorious for their fierce rivalries, and only Roman jurisdiction ended the frequent inter-city wars."¹⁴⁴ Even Paul, the writer of Titus,

¹⁴¹ Butterworth, 737.

¹⁴² Butterworth, 737.

¹⁴³ E.F. Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles*, (London and Southampton: The Camelot Press, 1948), 172.

¹⁴⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1999), 152.

attributes truth to the national characterization of the Cretans as well.¹⁴⁵ The irony displayed here is that Paul attributes a title of *prophet* to a non-Christian in doing so. Gordon D. Fee suggests that this may be Paul's attempt to add emphasis on an already proven fact, rather than Paul's acknowledgment that the *prophet* designation is true.¹⁴⁶ Yet Gordon D. Fee considers it a powerful irony that "a non-Christian *prophet* speaks truly about some would-be Christian leader, who because of their false teaching and behavior is true *Cretans*, liars all."¹⁴⁷

Thus, Titus' task to "put in order that which remains to be done," required ensuring that the church at Crete positioned itself through examples in ethical and moral life-styles to help to transform the nation of Crete. It is important to note, however, that E.F. Scott's view is that "while the church at Crete would be a model and be exposed to the ills of society at large, they were not to isolate themselves, or stand self-righteously above the community in judgment, especially having so recently belonged to it themselves."¹⁴⁸ Their character and actions were to stand in opposition to the behavior they sought to correct, but they were not to view themselves as above those not yet converted.

Given the Biblical and historical evidence of how the Cretans were viewed, it would not be out of the ordinary to assume that they specifically referred to behaviors

¹⁴⁵ Arland J. Hultgren, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament, I-II Timothy, Titus*, (Minneapolis, MN., 1984), 157. Who is the publisher?

¹⁴⁶ Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence, The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 1994), 777.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 777.

¹⁴⁸ Scott, 173.

that Titus needed to ensure were corrected in the church, if the church was to become an example for the rest of the community.¹⁴⁹ The examples exhorted in the book of Titus are also paraenetical in that “their principal function, among others, is to provide rules and regulations to direct the practical ethical lives of the people.”¹⁵⁰ In contrasting and comparing *teaching* with *example*, St. Augustine says, “thus they [those who teach] benefit many by preaching what they do not practice; but many more would be benefited if they were to do [emphasis added] what they say.”¹⁵¹ The desire to become an example is not an easy task and must be birth out of one’s notion of true discipleship. In this regard, Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, of the merciful “They [disciples of Christ] go out and seek all who are meshed in the toils of sin and guilt...no distress is too great, no sin tool appalling for their pity.”¹⁵²

The arduous assignment to lead the Christian effort at Crete was given to Titus, who had served Paul well on tough assignments such as the one at rebellious Corinth, and he was the logical one to stay in Crete to speak and live the truths of a Christian.¹⁵³ Titus was called a *faithful henchman*.¹⁵⁴ Titus himself “a Greek youth whom Paul refused to have circumcised (Galatians. 2) accompanied the apostle on his missionary tours of

¹⁴⁹ James L. Bailey and Lyle D. Vander Broek, *Literary forms In The New Testament, A Handbook*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster, John Knox Press), 1992.

¹⁵⁰ Isocrates Ad Nic. 41.

¹⁵¹ D.W. Robertson, Jr., Translator, *Saint Augustine On Christian Doctrine*, (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1997), 165.

¹⁵² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (New York, New York: Touchstone Edition, 1995), 111.

¹⁵³ Barclay, 232-233.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Greece.”¹⁵⁵ While not a lot else is known about Titus, “from the scattered references to him, there emerges a picture of a man who was one of Paul’s most trusted and most valuable helpers.”¹⁵⁶ Titus was a man fit to face the difficult situation at Crete.¹⁵⁷ According to William Barclay’s assessment, “he was the man to send to the place where there was trouble.”¹⁵⁸

When considering the shape of the text, as Tiffany and Ringe suggest, the issues faced by the community in Crete were not that different from the context of the community (Ward 5) in which this author’s project is birthed.¹⁵⁹ The Cretans were known for their constant disputes among each other, which is often the case between young males in Ward 5. These rivalries among young males in Ward 5 sometimes lead to deadly consequences among those with common bond, as rivalry wars must have lead to death among Cretans kin. One could also argue that the Cretans, like some of the young males in Ward 5, had a distorted or underdeveloped *meaning perspective*.¹⁶⁰ According to Mizerow: “Properly developed *meaning perspectives* provide us with criteria for judging

¹⁵⁵ Harris, 369.

¹⁵⁶ Barclay, 232.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Frederick C. Tiffany and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1996), 111-112.

¹⁶⁰ Mizerow, 44. *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 44.

or evaluating right and wrong, bad and good, beautiful and ugly, true and false, appropriate and inappropriate.”¹⁶¹

Without this deciphering ability, one cannot always make decisions within a framework of analysis and consequence. In young urban males, such as in Ward 5, the lack of a true *meaning perspective* can cause damaging consequences that are both immediate and long range. The author William Barclay indicates that “The time of youth is necessarily a time of danger.”¹⁶² He continues by adding:

“(i) In youth the blood runs hotter and the passions speak more commandingly. The tide of life runs strongest in youth and it sometimes threatens to sweep a young person away. (ii) In youth there are more opportunities for going wrong. Young people are thrown into company where temptation can speak with a most compelling voice. Often they have to study or work away from home and from the influences which keep them right... (iii) In youth there is often that confidence which comes from lack of experience... There is a risk, as there is a glory, in being young. For that very reason, the first thing at which any young person must aim is self-mastery.”¹⁶³

Therefore, positive examples demonstrated through a strong Christian mentoring program can teach self control and discipline which would have positive impact on the entire community.¹⁶⁴

An additional factor in the case of Crete that helps to understand Titus 1:5-8, is that false teachers had infiltrated the church. Although Gnosticism and other beliefs were causing distortion, William Barclay indicates that: “The worst were apparently Jews. They tried to persuade them [Cretans] that the simple story of Jesus and the Cross was

¹⁶¹ Mizerow, 44.

¹⁶² William Barclay, *The letters to Timothy and Titus: Second Edition*, (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1960), 251.

¹⁶³ Barclay, 251-252.

¹⁶⁴ Fiore, *The Function of Personal Example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles*, 209-216.

not sufficient, but that, to be really wise, they needed all the subtle stories and long genealogies and the elaborate allegories of the Rabbis.”¹⁶⁵ Gnostic ethics are rooted in Gnostic theology, cosmology, and anthropology. The absolute cosmic dualism in which the purportedly true God is totally separate from the universe, which he neither created nor governs, is reflected in the nature of man.¹⁶⁶ The Apostle Paul must have understood that it was important to organize and fortify the church against these teachings if the church at Crete was to have longevity in the community. In this regard, Stephan L. Harris finds support for this thesis in non-canonical documents and states: “The Pastor’s [Apostle Paul] concern for a solidly organized church that could withstand the assaults of false teachers or other troublemakers is further developed in a non-canonical document known as I Clement... [which] addresses issues of church leadership – particularly the means by which leaders possess legitimate authority – with which the pastorals had also wrestled.”¹⁶⁷

The community surrounding GMCHC has long been plagued with turbulence brought on by community poverty, gang rivalries, high teenage pregnancy, high rates of drug and alcohol abuse, unacceptable High School dropout rates, and other ills. Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church is a church with strong community ties to Ward 5 and specifically the Brentwood neighborhood. To continue engaging in the community’s transformation, it must remain mindful of the effects of *example* that teachers and leaders

¹⁶⁵ Barclay, 240.

¹⁶⁶ Carl F.H. Henry, Editor, *Wycliffe Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, (Peabody, MA; Hendrickson publishers, Inc., 1973), 262.

¹⁶⁷ Stephen L. Harris, *The New Testament, A Student’s Introduction, fourth edition*, (Boston: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2002), 369-370.

provide, and not stand in judgment of the community from whence many of its members came. It is also important that the teaching of Christian ethics focus on Godliness, and not church dogma. In regards to teaching Godliness, I. Howard Marshall states: "Moreover, it [Godliness] is a thoroughly dynamic description of life, one which the individual must actively (1 Timothy 4.7f) and consciously decide to pursue (Titus 2.12). It is a comprehensive term for the Christian life, combining inner and outer dimensions, and is no more a virtue than are faith and love which are equally comprehensive terms for the characteristics of Christian living. It implies a serious approach to life and religion by contrast with the frivolous disputations of the opponents (1 Timothy 2.2)."¹⁶⁸

If one were to extract a single theological implication from Titus 1:5-8, it is that theology and ethics are inextricably bound. Moreover, when they are bound together, their impact is exponentially greater than the sum of their individual parts. Frances Young states that, "Ethics could not be a mere matter of habit or preference or even conforming to society's laws. Somehow, the gospel provides teaching which has to be followed."¹⁶⁹ In his writings, Lewis R. Donelson, when making his case for the ethical arguments of the Pastoral Epistles states: "The ultimate impression produced by this aggregate of ideas is that the theological epithet of savior along with its verbal form determines directly the content and direction of the ethical and ecclesiastical life-style

¹⁶⁸ Marshall, 143.

¹⁶⁹ Young, 28.

promulgated in the letters. Again, we must admit that theology and ethics are intimately connected.¹⁷⁰

As mentioned earlier, such a conclusion does not mean that ethical behavior cannot be appropriated by any other means than through a Christian mentoring program. According to Richard B. Hays, however, it does suggest that “the hermeneutical task [of the church] is – in part – the task of rightly correlating our ethical norms with the modes of Scripture’s speech.”¹⁷¹ In this regard, the Scriptures can work in ethical discourse as rules, principles, paradigms, and as a symbolic world “through which we interpret reality.”¹⁷² Moreover, the Scripture can act as a catalyst for developing *social capital*, or communities of shared ethical values. To acquire *social capital* “requires habituation to the moral norms of a community and, in its context, the acquisition of virtues like loyalty, honest, and dependability.”¹⁷³ Through Christian mentoring, for young males, this author believes that a community of shared values can, in fact be attained.

Theological Foundation

When one considers the theological underpinnings of this project, the centrality of community and shared responsibility emerge. A community which focuses on executing a liberation motif designed for the community at large. Local churches must take a

¹⁷⁰ Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Arguments in the Pastoral Epistles*, (Tubingen: J.C.B Mohr, 1986), 140.

¹⁷¹ Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996), 209.

¹⁷² Ibid., 208-209.

¹⁷³ Francis Fukuyama, *Trust, The Social Virtues and The Creation of Prosperity*, (New York, New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1995), 26.

leadership role in surrounding communities. They must become the nucleus by which collaborative partnerships are formed that fosters the goal of humanity's uplift. From an Old Testament perspective, the idea of community finds its genesis in Yahweh's call of the people who would become the nation of Israel. Their call story is linked directly to their deliverance out of bondage in Egypt and their subsequent formation as a nation.¹⁷⁴

In this regard, the author Paul D. Hanson indicates that: "For the theme of Israel being called into being as a people through the God Yahweh's delivering them from slavery in Egypt is the most ubiquitous theme of Hebrew scripture, permeating hymns, historical narratives, and legal documents from the earliest to the latest of oral and then written transmission."¹⁷⁵ Hanson goes on to say that "Yahweh is remembered as the God who delivered the slaves out of Egypt."¹⁷⁶ John Bright, in his book *A History of Israel*, expounds further by saying, "Israel remembered the exodus for all time to come as the constitutive event that called her into being as a people. It stood at the center of her faith from the beginning onward, as is witnessed by her most ancient poems (Ex. 15:1-18), by confession-like pieces probably likewise of quick ancient origin (Deut. 6:20-25; 26:5-10; Josh. 24:2-13), as well as by other tests too numerous to list, down to the end of the Biblical period and beyond."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called, The Growth of Community in the Bible*, a (San Francisco, Harper and Row Publishers, 1987), 10-11.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 11.

¹⁷⁷ John Bright, *A History of Israel, Fourth Edition*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 122.

Through Biblical dialogue, we can understand that “God’s work on behalf of his people is often described in terms of deliverance or rescue.”¹⁷⁸ However, to fully exploit the dynamics of the Israel’s liberation motif, its call to community and purpose, and its relationship to this project, one must consider the context in which it was formed.

Through various circumstances, the Hebrews of the Old Testament end up at the bottom of the socio-economic scale as slaves in Egypt, a nation that had launched an ambitious building program.¹⁷⁹ Paul Hanson’s research leads to this conclusion:

“In Egypt, the people who were to emerge as the Hebrews of the exodus narrative belonged to a larger class of Semitic slaves who, in the course of migrations occasioned by economic necessity, had been absorbed into a society notoriously conservative in its attitude toward religion and culture. Tensions and even open conflicts did arise within the history of relationships between pharaohs and priests in Egypt, but both were united in commitment to a social system that buttressed their own personal power and wealth, and that was accordingly deaf to the concerns of those at the bottom of the social pyramid.”¹⁸⁰

Hanson concludes by saying, “The latter [Hebrews] had little hope of upward mobility, and lived the constant danger of decline into slavery through indebtedness.”¹⁸¹ Yet from this deplorable condition, Yahweh emerges as the God who elects Israel and requires a covenant.¹⁸² While John Bright concedes that the notion of election and covenant were not codified in early Israel as a manifesto, he does concludes that, “Both were

¹⁷⁸ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory In Christ, A Pauline Theology*, (Downers Grove, Illinois, Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 225.

¹⁷⁹ Hanson, 13.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸² Bright, 148.

fundamental to her understanding of herself and her God from the beginning.”¹⁸³ Israel’s call and deliverance was bound to Yahweh through a covenant to obey God’s commandments. While debate exists as to whether the Hebraic covenant originates from similar types of covenants exacted by Hittite Kings and their vassals, John Bright concludes that “there is no reason *a priori* why it may not have been known to the founders of Israel.”¹⁸⁴ He continues by stating that what is significant to remember is that, “Covenant could be maintained only so long as the divine Overlord’s stipulations were met; its maintenance required obedience and continual renewal by the freed moral choice of each generation.”¹⁸⁵

While a casual read of the Bible and Biblical history may lead one to infer that this community of called people was made up of one monolithic bloodline, John Bright reaches a different conclusion which may redirect local church’s thinking around the formation of a larger community that reaches beyond the pillars of the church. He states, “What is more to the point, there is abundant evidence that not all Israelites were in fact related one to another by blood. As we saw in the preceding chapter and as the Bible itself makes clear, Israel-both those parts of it that had come from the desert and those parts already present in Palestine who entered into its structure-included elements of the most heterogeneous origin who could not possibly have descended from a single family tree.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Ibid., 148.

¹⁸⁴ Bright, 151.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 156.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 168.

He goes on to say that, “And on the other hand, it was never her bloodstream, her racial stock or her language, that set Israel off from her immediate neighbors (Canaanites, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, etc), but rather the tradition (or, if one prefers, the ideology) to which she was committed.”¹⁸⁷

When one considers the socio-economic status of the young boys in this mentoring project, similarities emerge. While America has steadily grown as a nation over the last 100 years, urban African American teenage boys bottom out in almost every meaningful statistical category and often find themselves at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder with very little hope of upward mobility.¹⁸⁸ As it relates, specifically to the fifteen boys in this project, without exception, they come from households headed by single mothers. They all are at the mid to bottom of the socio-economic strata and based on personal dialogue with the boys and their parents, several of them have already had several major negative encounters with local law enforcement. Current urban renewal or major ambitious building efforts in Ward 5 (i.e., major housing and shopping center complexes) threaten to relocate and scatter them to other places across the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, accelerating their decline to the bottom. From this plight, many find themselves in situations where there appears to be no escape. Further, many urban African American teenage boys like these are negatively branded or simply ignored. While erudite promulgation strategically avoids discussion of this issue in terms of race,

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 168.

¹⁸⁸ Jawanza Kunjufu, *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys, Second Edition*, (Chicago, Illinois: African American Images, 2005), 2, 34, 153-163.

authors like Cornel West have offered divergent views.¹⁸⁹ In his book *Race Matters*, he states: “To engage in a serious discussion of race in America, we must begin not with the problems of black people but with the flaws of American society – flaws rooted in historic inequalities and longstanding cultural stereotypes.”¹⁹⁰ He continues by saying, “America has been historically weak willed in ensuring racial justice and has continued to resist fully accepting the humanity of blacks.”¹⁹¹ In other instances, they are studied like a *Black Box*. If one were to consider Michael J. Behe definition of *Black Box* this point is made poignantly clear. When Behe defines *Black Box* his says it is “a whimsical term for a device [person] that does something, but whose inner workings are mysterious- sometimes because the workings can’t be seen, and sometimes because they just aren’t comprehensible.”¹⁹²

From a theological perspective, it is the local church that should take on the responsibility of redefining community and create a phenomenon whereby community extends beyond perceived bloodlines (i.e., only those inside the four walls of their church building) and embrace these and other boys similarly situated. Local churches can then become the impetus for and the epicenter of sustainable models that bring together, in collaborative partnership, those churches, academia, community centers, and law enforcement entities that have a vested interest in the notion of community. By grafting these boys into a more expansive community governed by shared responsibility, they will

¹⁸⁹ Cornel West, *Race Matters*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2001), 2-3.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁹² Michael J. Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box, The Biochemical Challenge To Evolution*, (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 6.

see Christian *example* played out by the local church through a covenantal relationship with them. Moreover, they will come to understand the old African proverbs that *it takes a village to raise a child*. Over time these relationships will become the source for them to establish relationship with other teenage boys in the community that are more along the line of the David and Jonathan relationship than those ones that often lead to fights, drive by shootings and sometimes death.

In New Testament theology, the formation of community and shared responsibility is expressed in the Christ event. From Christ's redemptive work, emerges a liberating ethic that embodies the believer and transforms their thinking about themselves and about others. Brian K. Blount makes this point in his book, *Then the Whisper Put on Flesh, New Testament Ethics in an African American Context*, when he states, "The shattering of creation's boundaries that occurs with Jesus' death and resurrection is the gracious provocation of a new eschatological reality that enables human transgressions of the same kind. All people, regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, status or stature are equally acceptable in God's sight and therefore must be equally treated in human living. *It is precisely here, through its boundary-breaking intent that Pauline theology enables liberating human ethics.*"¹⁹³

Thomas R. Schreiner, in his book, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory In Christ, A Pauline Theology*, states it this way: "God's saving promises made to Israel in the Old Testament have now become a reality in and through the ministry, death and resurrection

¹⁹³ Brian K. Blount, *Then the Whisper Put on Flesh, New Testament Ethics in an African American Context* (Nashville; Abingdon Press, 2001), 140.

of Jesus Christ. God's saving promises are already a reality for the believer in Jesus-in this sense, God's plan is "already" being fulfilled."¹⁹⁴

One must be careful, however, not link this liberating human ethics with the idea of freedom as expressed by the atheistic existentialist who deny the existence of God and by extension, the Christ event.¹⁹⁵ In his writings on existentialism, the author Jean-Paul Sartre separated existentialism into two camps – those like Jasper and Gabriel Marcel who were Christians and believed in God, and those like Heidegger, himself and others who totally dismissed even the concept of a God.¹⁹⁶ Sartre states that "what they [both group of existentialists] have in common is that they think that existence precedes essence, or if you prefer, that subjectivity must be the starting point."¹⁹⁷ For the existentialist atheist to have theistic beliefs is "unreasonable because there is insufficient evidence for it."¹⁹⁸ For the atheistic existentialist, no God, no heaven or ethical framework exist and each human being essentially becomes what they make themselves and "will be what he will have planned to be. Not what he will want to be."¹⁹⁹ Despite the various cosmological, design and ontological arguments for the existence of God proffered by writers such as Thomas Aquinas and Rene Descartes, atheistic existentialists would argue that any success in teaching these boys ethics is not grounded in the idea of

¹⁹⁴ Schreiner, 20.

¹⁹⁵ Gordon Marion, Ed., *Basic Writings of Existentialism - Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions*, (New York: The Modern Library, 2004), 345.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 343-344.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 344.

¹⁹⁸ Brian Davies, *Philosophy of Religion, A Guide and Anthology*, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000), 43.

¹⁹⁹ Marino, 345.

God or the Christ event, but rather in the plan to do it. Conversely, Peter J. Gomes who wrote the introduction to the year 2000 reprint of Paul Tillich's book *The Courage To Be*, decries this kind of thinking by arguing that, "The fundamental existential question has to do with the fundamental question of individual meaning and purpose in an existence from which God has been displaced as the source of meaning, purpose, and order."²⁰⁰

Moreover, atheistic existentialism runs counter to the concept of *participation*. Many of the boys in this neighborhood have *planned* what they want to be. However, their plans are often in violent conflict with others in their community. Teaching them a set of Christian ethical and moral values will help them to eventually gain the courage in themselves to transform their lives and live in community with others. In this regard, Paul Tillich says, "Therefore, he who has the courage to be as a part has the courage to affirm himself as a part of the community in which he participates."²⁰¹ Tillich goes on to say, "A collective society is one in which the existence and life of the individual are determined by the existence and institutions of the group."²⁰² Thus, by extending the idea of community and shared responsibility to these boys, and teaching them Christian ethical principles, they are trained to participate in a community shaped by moral and ethical principles. This is the approach that Paul gave to Titus to fulfill the mission he had in Crete (Titus 1:4-8), and the connection of the New Testament theological concept of community to this ministry project.

²⁰⁰ Paul J. Tillich, *The Courage To Be, Second Edition*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), xix.

²⁰¹ Tillich, 91.

²⁰² Tillich, 92.

Christianity cannot be conceived of or acted out in the context of an individual. This is incongruent with God's intent for community in both the Old and New Testaments as explained above. This project speaks to the significance of the formation of community through the power and presence of God. For if salvation in New Testament theology through the Christ event positions the believer in the area that has been referred to as the "already" and the "not yet," then "parenesis (i.e., ethical exhortation) is necessary."²⁰³ This balance or tension between the two helps the called community to actualize harmony with humanity.²⁰⁴ In doing so, the called community becomes a merchant of a liberating motif that all humanity has the opportunity to embrace.

The concept of the "village" is also inherent in this project in that it connects a church: Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church; Academia: Howard University School of Divinity; Community Activism: Community Family Life Center and Law Enforcement: Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department in an effort to construct a mentoring model that will help these young boys live productive lives and become significant contributors to the community from which they come. For members of the called community, it also brings about an additional sense of freedom. Deitrich Bornhoeffer says it this way, "but it means to be free from ourselves, from our untruth, in which it seems as if I alone were there, as if I were the center of the world; to be free from the hatred with which I destroy God's creation; to be free from myself in order to be free for others. God's truth alone allows me to see others. It directs my attention, bent in on

²⁰³ Schreiner, 254.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 254.

myself, to what is beyond and shows me the other person.”²⁰⁵ Brad R. Braxton states it in a more poignant way in highlighting its meaning for the African American community, ergo, the African American teenage male: “Yet because of the emphasis in African American culture on community and group membership and the significance that is placed upon race in America, liberation cannot simply mean the freedom for individual African Americans to do their own thing for their own material benefit...Liberation in its fullest expression, for African Americans will promote personal fulfillment and at the same time sponsor efforts for larger social uplift.”²⁰⁶

Thus, by teaching Christian ethical and moral values to the teen age boys in this project, it will not only provide them with a Christian framework for making decision, it will also connect the teachings to the Christ event and its tenant obligations to live in community and in harmony with humanity. Or, put another way, it will teach them to live in harmony with other young boys in a community where fights and sometimes death would otherwise originate over the simplest things. Paul D. Hanson, in his book, *The People Called, The Growth of Community in the Bible*, links the idea of living in community in both the Old and New Testament when discussing how the Apostle Paul stood against the gnostics’ view of abdicating their role and responsibility in the present world: “It should be clear that the pattern of community building here is true to the early Yahwistic example, where the group responding to God’s antecedent act of grace in worship and praise proceeded to draw its principles of righteousness and compassion

²⁰⁵ Geoffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson, Ed., *A Testament To Freedom, The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, On Freedom* (Religious service marking the end of the semester, Ninth Sunday after Trinity Sunday, Berlin), July 24, 1932. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco 1990), 217-218.

²⁰⁶ Brad Ronnell Braxton, *No Longer Slaves, Galatians and African American Experience*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 11.

from the example of the Deliverer God. To be the body of Christ meant for Paul not only to be the beneficiaries of Christ's sacrifice, but to embody *in the world for the sake of the world*, the mind of Christ."²⁰⁷ On a more practical level, it should also be noted that in the Jonathan and David story, both act out in a sense of community and respect based on a covenant relationship grounded in mutual love and respect for each other and went against the classic relationship that should have existed between a Prince and a servant. The goal of this project is to teach a set of Christian ethical and moral principles that will hopefully cause teenage boys in the Brentwood neighborhood to act in similar ways.

How can young African American teenage boys, living on the margins of society and often without any significant Christian training, understand the idea of community through the Christ event? Especially when Christ does not look like him, and when the purveyors of the Christian ethical lifestyles, some white and some African Americans, do not understand or appear to be interested in his socio-economic condition nor how he is regularly stereotyped through well-intended Christian sermons and through a media that sometime conjure up images reminiscent of those in the movie *Birth of a Nation*. Moreover, the Bible which forms the basis of the Christ event was not historically interpreted as being significance to the African experience and was often used to curse the black man.²⁰⁸

In this regard, much work has been done over the years to contextualize the Biblical experience as it relates to the issue of race, class and ethnicity but application

²⁰⁷ Hanson, 447.

²⁰⁸ David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era, The Bible and the Justification for Slavery*, (Farnham Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing., 2009), 3-4.

still remains a wanting area. In his book *Troubling Biblical Waters, Race, Class and Family*, Cain Hope Felder states: “My intent in these chapters is to “trouble” (more precisely, “divide”: *schizo*) the waters of the biblical Sea of Reeds (LXX, Exodus 14:21) and clear a new pathway that leads to the Bible as an indispensable tool for liberation – sociopolitical and economic, as well as Spiritual. I further intend to trouble (*tarasso*) the placid waters of European historiography, exegesis, and hermeneutics on questions of race, class, and family.”²⁰⁹ Challenging the role of those in the academy and the pulpit, Felder goes on to say, “Those who exhibit a mind and body “paralysis” should be put into biblical waters troubled afresh. While these chapters represent an attempt to “trouble the waters,” they also say, “Rise, take up your pallet, and walk” (John 5:8).”²¹⁰ Thus, the idea of liberation theology at least for African Americans begins with recontextualizing biblical stories so that there is an accurate accounting of the African presence in the Bible. It is “more than a release from the unseen forces of evil. It is also freedom from the concrete oppressions which are the result of human sin and the structures of evil in the world.”²¹¹ This may seem a small effort, but could be significant in relating to young boys who may not have any relationship with the Bible and are not particularly interested in gaining one. Thus, academia and the ecclesia must tell the Biblical story in a way that brings the event and some of the characters alive in a way that reaches their context.

²⁰⁹ Cain Hope Felder, *Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family*, Eighteenth printing, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, April 2003), xiv.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ James H. Evans, Jr. compilation; G.E. Gorman, Advisory Editor, *Black Theology, A Critical Assessment and Annotated Bibliography*, (West Port, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1987), 7.

In the growth period between 1966 and 1969, the idea of liberation theology saw tremendous growth. James H. Cone, one of the more prolific writers on black theology stated in his writing, *Black Theology and Black Liberation*: "The significance of black theology is found in the conviction that the content of the Christian gospel is liberation. This means that any talk about God that fails to take seriously the righteousness of God as revealed in the liberation of the weak and downtrodden is not Christian language. It may be "religious" or "churchy" and thus "patriotic," but it has nothing to do with him who has called us into being and who came to us in Jesus Christ and is present as Holy Spirit with us today."²¹² Cone continues by articulating the responsibility of those who must take on the mantle to fight for the liberation that so vividly lies in the true meaning of the Christ event. To this point he says, "To speak of the God of Christianity is to speak of him who has defined himself according to the liberation of the oppressed. Christian theology, the pursuing its church-function, is that discipline which analyzes the meaning of God's liberation in light of Jesus Christ, showing that all actions that make for the freedom of man are indeed the action of God. Herein lays the heart of black theology's perspective on the theological task."²¹³ What Cone raises is a point that is integral to the relationship that must be built among the young teen age boys in the Brentwood neighborhood. The very essence of a Christian based mentoring program must be grounded in a liberation motif that truly liberates. To be effective, the idea of who they are and the situational bonds that gird them must be understood and dealt with. So the point of liberation is liberation from what really binds. One may start by

²¹² James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, ed., *Black Theology, a documentary history, Volume one: 19-1979, Second Edition, Revised*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 109.

²¹³ Cone, 109-110.

recontextualizing the Bible, but the essence of church function and church dialogue, must be centered on understanding the plight of young African American teenage boys and on telling the story of how their liberation is directly tied to the God story and the Christ event. The threat to obtaining this goal lies in the fact that “too many Christians have forgotten how to tell the story.”²¹⁴ When this connection is lost, those youth lose interest and seek other venues to satisfy the yearning for knowledge that lies in the pit of their soul. Miguel A. De La Torre, in his book *Reading the Bible from the Margins*, says the following in regards to this point, “To read the Bible from the margins is to read from the context of those who suffer death, literally and figuratively, because of the way society is constructed. Those with power and privilege are not cognizant of how their interpretations can foster the oppression of others. Hence, liberating the Bible from these death-imposing interpretations require a methodical reading of the Scripture through the eyes of the disenfranchised.”²¹⁵

Additionally, mentoring and teaching Christian ethics and moral values will require continued scholarship. It is not enough to answer the issues of today out of the Spirit. Vincent L Wimbush, in his article “*Rescue The Perishing*”: *The Importance of Biblical Scholarship in black Christianity*, indicate this importance by saying, “It [Black Christianity] must take biblical scholarship seriously because only through such scholarship can it begin first to *reconstruct* as much as possible the world of early Christianity, that it may separate the wheat from the chaff, or cut through the heaps of

²¹⁴ Quote from a lecture by Dr. Joy J. Moore, PhD, Associate Dean of Black Church Studies, Duke University Divinity School, (August 18, 2010), United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio.

²¹⁵ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Reading the Bible from the Margins*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 6.

accumulated traditions and interpretations which are not in its best interest. Then it can rightly proceed to *reshape* that chunk of Christendom of which it is part, and perhaps, contribute to reshape the form and priorities of the whole.”²¹⁶ The purpose of the collaboration between the Howard University School of Divinity and Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church is to create the healthy dialogue so that orthodoxy and orthopraxy are held in tension, creating innovative Biblical based solutions to telling the story and teaching Christian ethics and moral values.

So what does this theology mean in the context of this project? It means that teaching Christian ethics and morals to teenage boys in urban settings such as the Brentwood neighborhood of Washington, D.C., requires diligence and a constant reminder of who we are as a community of believers. It requires that constant shaping and reshaping of community so that those on the margins of society can be treated as part of God’s humanity. James Cone said it best regarding how Christian theology should unfold when he said:

“Christian theology is a theology of liberation. It is a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ. This means that its sole reason for existence is to put into ordered speech the meaning of God’s activity in the world, so that the community of the oppressed will recognize that their inner thrust for liberation is not only consistent with the gospel but is the gospel of Jesus Christ. There can be no Christian theology which is not identified unreservedly with those who are humiliated and abused. In fact, theology ceases to be a theology of the gospel when it fails to arise out of the community of the oppressed. For it is impossible to speak of the God of Israelite

²¹⁶ James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, ed., *Black Theology, a documentary history*, volume two: 1980-1992: Vincent L. Winbush, “*Rescue The Perishing*”: *The Importance of Biblical Scholarship in Black Christianity*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 1998), 215.

history, who is the God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ, without recognizing that he is the God *of* and *for* those who labor and are heavy laden.”²¹⁷

Until we reach that profound day when the story of God and Jesus Christ is told in a way that liberates all, the oppressed and the oppressor, we travel “The Long and Stony Road.”²¹⁸

²¹⁷Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, (Philadelphia & New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970), 17-18.

²¹⁸Cain Hope Felder, ed., *Stony the Road We Trod, African American Biblical Interpretation*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 7.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Treatment Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this ministry project proposes that attitudinal changes would occur in African American teenage boys living in the Brentwood community of Ward Five of Washington, District of Columbia (also referred to as Washington, D.C.), if a Christian based mentoring program were provided. The population of the proposed project consisted of fifteen African American teenage boys, ages thirteen to nineteen years of age from the Brentwood community. Historically, the Brentwood community has been a high crime area where gangs and crews of African American males have engaged in violent feuds to protect their drug territories. Many of the gang and crew members have been and are teenage boys. The high profile life style and the quick and easy money from drugs have contributed to escalating rates of high school dropouts among teenage African American boys in the community, rising to over 50% in many cases.¹ Many of these teenage boys already have criminal records. Many will re-enter the prison system at one time or another in the future. The less fortunate ones may be murdered. The population chosen for this mentoring program represented a sample of high risk African American teenage boys from this community.

¹ Michael Bimbaum, "D.C. Graduation Rate Down," *The Washington Post*, June 9, 2009.

Methods and Techniques

The mentoring program was composed of four instructional sessions which taught specific Christian moral and ethical principles to the participants. The specific moral and ethical principles were focused on four areas. They were:

1. An understanding of God and heaven
2. Respect for oneself and others
3. Respect for parents and authority; and,
4. Honesty

A collaborative approach to this ministry project was taken to fully integrate the teaching and demonstration of these Christian principles by choosing partners who would provide resources, information, and access to venues where teaching and examples would merge to better instruct the boys. The collaboration for this ministry project consisted of four partners. They were, the Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church (GMCHC), Faculty from Howard University School of Divinity (HUSD), the Alfred A. Owens, Jr. Family Life Community Center (FLCC) and Judicial and law enforcement communities of Washington, D.C. The GMCHC is an urban mega church in the Pentecostal denomination, with over seven thousands adult members on roll. It has long standing ties with the community and operates several community services such as a community HIV/AIDS facility, a drug and alcohol counseling facility, a food and clothing bank, a job bank and empowerment center, and a homeless ministry that provides counseling and access to case management and temporary housing. The GMCHC had resources and long standing ties with the community to ensure that a well structure mentoring program had

credibility. The faculty from HUSD participating in the ministry project was the former Dean of HUSD and had academic and practical experience in designing and implementing urban mentoring programs. The Alfred A. Owens, Jr. Family Life Center is a non-profit entity that has been in existence for eleven years and has partnered with national and local entities, as well as the federal and District governments to bring services and information to communities in Washington, D.C. The representatives from the law enforcement and judicial systems in Washington, D.C. provided representatives who have partnered with GMCHC on prior occasions to provide information and community resources. These collaborating agencies/organizations were selected because they have all have separate and ongoing direct or indirect impact on the African American teenage boys in the Brentwood community. The idea of the collaboration was to leverage these resources in support of these boys so that the collective impact of their separate efforts would be exponential. Although there was no formal written agreement developed between the collaborating partners, specific roles and responsibilities were defined and monitored through a governance structure which included weekly conference calls, updates and lessons learned. In terms of specific roles, Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church served as the primary support for the project. Key responsibilities included providing mentors, transportation and gas for field trips to places such as the National Great Blacks In Wax Museum in Baltimore, Maryland. GMCHC provided materials, resources and financial support for the project as needed. Through this writer's efforts, GMCHC also designed and developed the mentoring program and taught the instructional lessons to the participants. The role of the FLCC was to provide the space in which the instructional sessions were taught. They also provided free membership to the

Community Family Life Center for all participants for a six month period. This incentive provided each teenage boy access to the Community Family Life Center's chapel, library, computer laboratory with internet accessibility, weight and fitness room, AMF certified bowling alley, showers, as well as the roof top basketball and tennis court. A member of the Board of Directors of the FLCC, who is also an Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) Representative in Ward Five, which included the Brentwood community, provided assistance in identifying at risk teenage boys who would benefit from the Christian based mentoring program. Based on his knowledge of many of the boys in Brentwood community and their parents, he visited families to discuss the Christian mentoring program and get consent from the parents for the boys to participate. The faculty member from the Howard University School of Divinity provided advisory support to this writer in designing key components of the mentoring program, particularly as it related to the Christian moral and ethical values to be taught. Representatives from the Washington D.C. metropolitan police department provided briefings to the boys regarding the community outreach role of the police department. They agreed to provide these briefings to these boys and others on an on-going basis as requested. The idea of collaborating with the police department was to create bridge dialogue between two parties (the boys and the police department) that are sometimes at odds in the community. At least one Officer has also agreed to serve as a mentor and chaperon when possible. The role of representatives from the judicial system of Washington, D.C. was to provide informational briefings to the boys about the judicial system, highlighting how it worked and discussing some of the laws (such as drug laws) that are often key reasons why African American boys are frequently incarcerated. The briefing also focused on some of

the rights and privileges accorded all citizens, including these boys. Although the Christian mentoring program has officially ended for the purposes of this project, it is still in operation consisting of the same fifteen boys. All partners in the collaboration have agreed to continue their respective roles on an ongoing basis with these fifteen boys and others who will become participants in this ongoing program. These fifteen boys in the initial program will be integrated into a Rites of Passage program established by GMCHC.

The research methodology used for this project was qualitative.² A pre-test and post-test survey process was used to evaluate attitudinal changes. As an initial part of the process, a two hour focus group was held with the group of fifteen teenage boys. They were asked to fill out a survey questionnaire consisting of thirteen questions which provided demographic information. They were also asked to complete a pre-test survey of thirty statements using a legend of five possible responses which were, *never, rarely, sometimes, usually or always*. In response to a particular statement such as *I believe in God and Heaven*, they could respond by saying *never, rarely, sometimes, usually or always*. The statements were designed to evaluate the attitude of the teens toward each of the Christian principles that were to be taught in the four sessions. For example statements one, two, three, four, eight, eleven, twelve, and thirteen were designed to measure attitudes toward Principle One - God and Heaven. Statements five, six, seven, nine, ten, fourteen, twenty eight and twenty nine measured Principle Two - Respect for Self and Others. Statements twenty two through twenty seven and statement thirty measured Principle Three - Respecting Parents and Authority. Finally, Statements fifteen

²John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Public), 179.

through twenty one measured Principle Four - Honesty. Using data from the Pre-Test survey, a series of four instructional sessions were conducted in two hour increments with the same fifteen teenage boys.

The key scriptures used for teaching the Project's Christian moral and ethical principals included the following:

1. Session I - Exodus 20:1-17
2. Session III - Matthew 5:2-16
3. Session II - Psalm 1; Proverbs 3; 10 and 15. Ecclesiastes 12
4. Session IV – Luke 8:15; Romans 8:21; Luke 11:2-4

Session I focused on Principle One - the idea of God and heaven. Session one's scripture text was Exodus 20:1-17 outlining the Ten Commandments which God gave Moses. The key outcome of this session was to teach that there is a God and that God is a giver of moral laws by which we should live and that in the Christian faith, God resides in a place called heaven. This presentation was followed by a lecture from the uniformed police department. Their presentation focused on their efforts to build trust and community relations in Ward Five where these boys live. The primary purpose of this presentation was to diffuse the myth that law enforcement personnel were enemies of the community and create some bridge dialogue between the two groups (the boys and law enforcement officials) who are often at odds in the community. Session II focused on Principle Two - respect for oneself and respect for others. The biblical texts used for this session was Matthew 5:2-16, a passage of scripture often referred to as the *Beatitudes*.

The outcome expected from this session was to acquaint the boys with biblical scripture that outlines an acceptable pattern of life that is based on love and respect for oneself and others. In this session, the boys also received a presentation from representatives from the judicial system in Washington, D.C. The outcomes of this session were to provide knowledge to the participants about how the judicial system works, what critical laws and rights they should know, and to provide them with material that they could take home for their parents as ongoing reference material. Session Three focused on Principle Three - respect for parents and authority. A series of biblical scriptures were used. They included Psalm 1, Proverb 3, 10 and 15, and Ecclesiastes 12. These scriptures focus on correct Christian behavior, instructions from a father, the delight in which a father takes when a son obeys, and advice and guidance on how to deal effectively with authority. The outcome expected from this session was that the boys would gain an understanding of correct conduct and behavior which will improve their ability to deal effectively with authority at home, in school and when confronted by law enforcement officials in the community. Finally, Session Four focused on Principle Four - honesty. The biblical scriptures for this session included Luke 8:15; Romans 8:21; and Luke 11:2-4. These scriptures focus on the Christian concept of developing an honest heart and acting honest toward oneself and others. The outcome expected from this session was that the boys would gain an understanding of examples of honest behavior and how it is valued in society.

After the four sessions were completed, a post-survey was conducted. The fifteen teenage boys were surveyed using the same survey instrument utilizing the identical questions as those in the pre-test. The responses to these two questionnaires were

compared and analyzed to determine if attitudinal changes had indeed occurred. The results are chronicled in Chapter Five of this ministry project.

Conclusion

The results of the pre and post survey demonstrated that there were positive attitudinal changes in the way the participants perceived God and heaven and the way they viewed respect for parents and authority. The results of the mentoring program demonstrated that Christian mentoring can have an overall positive impact in improving moral and ethical values of African American teenage boys, and by extension, other similarly situated participants.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Designing the Research Project

The hypothesis of this ministry project is that if a Christian based mentoring program was established for African American boys in the Brentwood neighborhood and was used to teach Christian moral and ethical principles, it would provide a framework for better decision making. The specific moral and ethical values taught focused on providing them an understanding of God and heaven, respect for oneself and others, respect for parents and authority, and honesty. This researcher worked collaboratively with representatives of Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church, the Alfred A. Owens, Jr. Community Family Life Center, a faculty member from the Howard University School of Divinity, and representatives from the judicial and law enforcement communities of Washington, D.C. to establish and maintain this ministry project. There were numerous challenges in establishing this ministry project. Identifying and maintaining a core group of teenage boys was a significant challenge at the beginning of the project. However, we utilized a member of the Board of Directors of the Alfred A. Owens, Jr. Community Family Life Center to assist in identifying teenage African American boys in the Brentwood neighborhood who would benefit from a Christian mentoring program. Having served as a member of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission for Ward Five of Washington, D.C., which included the Brentwood neighborhood, this representative was

instrumental in identifying boys. The initial intent was to identify fifteen boys who would be taught Christian ethical and moral principles over a four week period on Saturdays. At the beginning of the ministry project, the numbers swelled to twenty and sometimes dwindled to less than ten. For this reason, this researcher had to extend the time period of the project to ensure that a stable group of boys took the pre-test, attended the training sessions, and took the post-test. As it turned out, after the fourth week, we ended up with a group of twelve boys who were able to complete the entire process. Another factor was that the traditional classroom setting for teaching these boys could not be used as the exclusive method of communicating. Additional activities were added were infused into the project to ensure that the boys remained interested and their attendance remained high. The activities were a mix of social activities such as bowling, and historical and cultural such as the visit to the National Great Blacks In Wax Museum in Baltimore.

The overall goal of the project was to utilize a mentoring program to teach Christian specific moral and ethical principles to a group of teenage boys from the community who were not affiliated with any organized religion. As mentioned above, the specific moral and ethical values taught focused on providing them an understanding of God and heaven, respect for oneself and others, respect for parents and authority, and honesty. The mentors in the project served as examples for the boys to emulate both in the instructional setting and when out on social, historical and cultural outings. By serving as examples in those instructional settings, one could provide models for them to emulate. The idea of the ministry project was to extend the boundaries of the beloved community at Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church to embrace those young African American teenage boys in the neighborhood. Although this ministry project is designed

to fulfill the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary, it was also birth out of a passion of the researcher and will continue as a viable program. The researcher had the following objectives in mind for this ministry project:

- A. Establish a workable collaborative leadership model that would engage a variety of entities to assist in teaching Christian moral and ethical character to the teenage boys engaged in the ministry project.
- B. Create closer relationship and provide support to community parents, often single mothers, who were raising teenage boys without the presence of a significant male role model in their life.
- C. Educate and provide Christian based examples to the teenage boys so they would have a framework for making better lifestyle decisions.
- D. Establish a sustainable model of collaboration that could be studied by the academy and possibly taught as examples of collaborative ministry.

The qualitative research method was chosen to test the hypothesis. The Alfred A. Owens, Jr. Community Family Life Center, 605 Rhode Island Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C., was the primary meeting site for the educational and informational sessions. Various other venues, such as local bowling alleys were used when recreational activities were a part of the sessions.

Implementation

Focus Group

The researcher, assisted by other presenters, provided training and other informational sessions to the boys at the Alfred A. Owens Jr., Family Life Center. The initial session was orientation and provided information to the boys about the Christian

mentoring program and its objectives. Initially, most of the boys participating in the program were filled with curiosity about the program and about the presenters. In urban areas, there is always a certain *sizing up* that goes on to determine if you are *for real*. The researcher attended all sessions whether presenting or listening. The sessions were held on Saturdays from eleven in the morning to around two thirty in the afternoon, with time for lunch. The four core sessions were designed to teach certain Christian moral and ethical values. The specific moral and ethical values taught to the teenage boys in these sessions focused on God and heaven, respect for others, respect for parents and authority, and valuing property. The boys were administered a survey questionnaire composed of some general background information and thirty statements that they could respond to based on a legend scaled from one to five as further demonstrated in the data below.

Educational Component

The training on Christian moral and ethical values focused on select Old and New Testament passages (see appendix C). These scriptures were read to the boys and interactive discussions were held regarding their meaning of the scripture and how it related to the specific moral or ethical principles being taught. The participation from the boys was at times robust and at times non-existent. At the end of each session and discussions, basic Christian moral and ethical principles were expounded. The specific moral and ethical values discussed with the teenage boys in these sessions focused on God and heaven, respect for others, respect for parents and authority, and valuing property.

The key scriptures used for teaching Christian moral and ethical values included the following:

1. Session I - Exodus 20:1-17
2. Session III - Matthew 5:2-16
3. Session II - Psalm 1; Proverbs 3; 10 and 15. Ecclesiastes 12
4. Session IV - Luke 11:2-4

Session I focused on the idea of God and heaven. Session one's scripture text focused on Exodus 20:1-17 outlining the Ten Commandments which God gave Moses. The key outcome of this session was to teach that there is a God and that God is a giver of moral laws by which we should live and that in the Christian faith, God resides in a place called heaven. This briefing was also supplemented with a briefing from the uniformed police department. Their briefing focused a great deal on their efforts concerning community relations in Ward 5 where these boys live. Their primary concern was to diffuse the myth that law enforcement personnel were enemies of the community and help to create some bridge dialogue between two groups (the boys and law enforcement officials) that are often at odds in the community. Session II focused on respect for oneself and respect for others was devoted strictly to the teaching of ethical and moral principles using the cited biblical texts. This close up session provided the opportunity for the boys to talk to law enforcement officials in a non-adversarial and non-threatening manner. Session III was supplemented with representative from the judicial system who discussed the operation of the judicial system. They also provided information on crimes and sentencing guidelines for Washington, D.C. Finally, Session

IV was supplemented by a mentoring discussion from a former Dean of the Howard University School of Divinity.

Focus Group Responses to Pre-test and Post-test Surveys

The focus group consisted of fifteen teenage boys from the Brentwood neighborhood of Washington, D.C. One of the boys was seventeen years old, one was sixteen, two were fifteen, seven were fourteen, and four were thirteen years old. Eight or 53.4% of the boys indicated that they lived in a home with a single female as head of the household. Seven of the boys, or 46.6% of the boys indicated that both parents were in their household. Based on what we know about the demographics of the neighborhood, these percentages are consistent with other survey data that show a growing rise in the number of households headed by single mothers and a negative impact of the economic downturn on them and their family's standard of living.¹ What this data revealed is that the majority of the boys have no male role model in their home to provide consistent mentoring. One could not use this data alone, however, to conclude that there were no male role models in their lives at all. Through additional discussions held with the youth during the training interventions, it was confirmed by the 53.4% that there were no consistent role male role models in their lives. The absence of a consistent male role model in the life of young urban African American teenagers increases the possibility of that these young boys will be at risk. This is particularly true in cases where single mothers as the single wage earner are frequently absent from the home to make a living for the household.

¹Jeff Chapman and Jared Bernstein, *Falling Through The Safety Net, Low-Income Single Mothers In The Jobless Recovery*, Economic Policy Institute Issue Brief, Issue Brief # 191 (Washington, D.C.), 5-6.

Of the fifteen participants, only four, or twenty seven percent indicated that their parent(s) attended a church regularly. Three or twenty percent indicated that their parent(s) attended church sometimes. Four or twenty seven percent of the respondents indicated that their parent(s) never attended church. While four, or twenty seven percent did not respond to the question in the pre-survey or post-survey. All were still in either middle school or high. All except one had at least five siblings. The one exception had two siblings. Only two acknowledge having been engaged in Sunday school or some early form of religious education. Ten of the fifteen acknowledge being baptized. All but one had traveled outside of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. This data suggests that the majority of the boys in this ministry project have not received sustained Christian education which focuses on moral and ethical principles.

To determine attitudinal changes based on this ministry project, a total of thirty statements were provided to the teenage boys in a pre survey response. This same survey instrument was used to conduct a post survey attitudinal response after the training sessions were conducted. There were 30 statements to which the fifteen participants were asked to respond. The possible survey responses included the following:

1 = Never: does not ever occur

2 = Rarely: does not ordinarily occur

3 = Sometimes: does occur on various occasions

4 = Usually: does occur most of the time

5 = Always: does occur every time

In analyzing the data, it should be noted that during the course of the Christian mentoring program for this ministry project, opportunities were also provided as an opportunity for the boys to demonstrate some of the Christian moral and ethical values that were taught. This may have had a bearing on some significant swings in responses to the some of the statements listed below.

1. Statement One – I identify myself as a Christian.

In the pre-survey results, forty six percent of the respondents to this statement indicated that *usually* or *always* identify themselves as Christians. In the post-survey, this percentage rose to sixty percent for the same two categories. This increase came exclusively as a result of a shift in those who only *sometime* identified themselves as Christians. There was no change in the pre-survey and post-survey for the twenty seven percent of the respondents who indicated that they *never* identify themselves as Christians. This data suggests that while teaching Christian ethics and principles may have an impact on those who are somewhat predisposed to Christianity, short training sessions such as the ones used for this ministry project may not have significant attitudinal impact on how those who have *never* identified themselves as Christians view themselves after the training. Thus, the type of training sessions used in this model may be good for teaching Christian moral and ethical principles and causing some attitudinal change in that regard. However, it may not be enough for conversion in and of itself.

2. Statement Two – I believe in God and heaven.

In the pre survey, sixty seven percent of the respondents indicated that they *always* believed in God. That number rose to eighty seven percent in the post survey. Thirty three percent in the pre-survey indicated that they *usually* believe in God and

heaven which decreased to thirteen percent in the post survey. All of the respondents from that category changed their response to indicate that they *always* believed in God and heaven. With one hundred percent of respondents indicating strong proclivities toward God and heaven, it demonstrates that these concepts are deeply ingrained in our society without regard to whether one acquires this knowledge in or out of organized religion. This pattern of belief can be used as an entry way to providing more in-depth Christian training.

3. Statement Three – I attend Sunday school.

In the pre-survey, eighty seven percent of the respondents indicated that they *never* or *rarely* attended Sunday school. In the post-survey, that percentage remained relatively unchanged at eighty six percent. This data suggests that formal Christian educational training is not a regular part of the childhood experience for most of the boys engaged in this ministry project. Although a majority identify themselves as Christian in statement two, they are not necessarily being consistently taught Christian moral and ethical values in an organized manner. The long range implication is that lack of a Christian support structure that teaches moral and ethical values from the perspective of their religious orientation could weaken their ability to emerge successfully from the pattern of life common for teenage boys in their community.

4. Statement Four – I participate in Christian sponsored activities.

In the pre-survey, sixty percent of the respondents indicated that they *never* or *rarely* participated in Christian sponsored activities. In the post survey, the percentage of respondents who *rarely* or *never* participate in Christian sponsored activities remained the same at sixty percent. In responses to both statement three and statement four, there is

an underlying current that suggests that the parents at home are not providing these boys with training and activities germane to their expressed religious orientation. Many of the parents are single mothers and the reasons for not teaching could be various, such as being too busy working to provide financial support for the family.

5. Statement Five – I consider how I want to be treated when deciding how to treat others.

In analyzing the pre-survey and post-survey responses to this statement, it is noted that there was a significant shift in attitude. Those who indicated that they *usually* or *always* make the aforementioned consideration when deciding how to treat others jumped from a pre-survey percentage of sixty percent to eighty seven percent in the post- survey results. This percentage change suggests that the training sessions on Christian morals and ethics, played a key role in strengthening the attitudes of the participants regarding the way others should be treated by them. This has positive implications for bridging relationships among boys in the neighborhood.

6. Statement Six – I am bothered when I do something wrong to someone.

Of significant note regarding this statement is that in the pre-survey, only twenty percent of respondents indicated that they were *always* bothered when they did something wrong to someone. In the post-survey results, that percentage doubled to forty percent. It is also significant to note that overall the number of respondents who indicated that they *never* or *rarely* was bothered when they did something wrong to someone, reduced from twenty percent in the pre-survey to zero percent in the post-survey. Overall, in the post survey, all respondents indicated that they were bothered at least sometime when they did something wrong to someone. This attitudinal shift demonstrates the ability of Christian moral or ethical training to shift attitudes away from what is learned in the survival mode

of the *streets*. Many of these boys live in environments where demonstrating a Christian conscience about humanity may cause one to be considered weak. Yet the teaching appears to have had an impact in changing attitude.

7. Statement Seven – I solve conflicts with other boys and girls before they get to be big problems.

These were surprising statistics in both the pre-survey and post-survey. The results indicate that the boys were good at solving conflicts. Yet, based on discussions with parents, several of these boys were, in fact were not solving their conflicts before they got to be big problems. Yet one hundred percent indicated that they *sometimes*, *usually*, or *always* solve conflicts before they escalate. It is difficult to ascertain why these responses deviated from what was known. The best explanation may be because the boys did not want to be perceived as troublemakers by their mentors and were willing to make statements that were otherwise wrong.

8. Statement Eight – I forgive people who have done something wrong to me.

There was a shift in response to this statement in the post survey. Twenty six percent of the boys in the pre-survey indicated that they *rarely* or *never* forgave people who did them wrong. In the post-survey, attitudes shifted and one hundred percent indicated that they now *sometimes*, *usually* or *always* forgive. It should be noted that in the sessions taught, a heavy emphasis was placed on the decision to forgive those who had done something wrong to you. It appears by the post-survey data that teachings concerning the Christian moral and ethical principle of forgiveness took roots. Thus, there are strong possibilities for changing attitudes around forgiveness through teaching Christian moral and ethical principles. This has significant possibilities for changing cultural environment where feuds among boys last for decades.

9. Statement Ten – I am considered a peacemaker who tries to repair relationship that have been broken.

The overall statistical variation on this statement changed marginally with practically equal responses between the pre-survey and post-survey. The largest shift came among those boys who *usually* ask for forgiveness. In the pre-survey that percentage was twenty percent. In the post-survey, the percentage rose to thirty three percent. The data suggests that while the moral and ethical teachings caused a shift in forgiving others who wronged them, as indicated in statement 8, there is still reluctance to ask for forgiveness when they have done someone wrong.

10. Statement Ten – I am considered a peacemaker who tries to repair relationships that have been broken.

The pre-survey and post-survey data on this statement was a bit difficult to interpret from the pure numbers. While there was a twenty percent shift in pre-survey and post-survey on the percentage of respondents who said they *always* consider themselves a peacemaker, the pre-survey responses appear to be inconsistent with information we received from parents about several of the students who were, in fact, the center of what would be considered trouble making. What is important from an observation perspective, however, is that in social and instructional settings each of these boys responded to each other in a positive manner even though they were not all part of the same neighborhood.

11. Statement Eleven – I value all human life as God's creation.

By an eighty seven percent margin, the respondents to this statement indicated in the pre-survey that they *usually* or *always* value human life as God's creation. The

response in the post-survey rose to one hundred percent who indicated that they *usually* or *always* value human life as God's creation. This data suggests that while the specific tenets of Christianity may not be taught in the homes, the concept of God is given credence. It also suggests that the larger society functioning in a Judeo-Christian environment have sufficiently integrated the idea of God and heaven into the lexicon and cultural norm of society.

12. Statement Twelve – I pray when I am faced with a decision about how to handle a conflict with someone else.

In the pre-survey results seventy-four percent of the respondents indicated that they prayed *sometimes, usually, or always* when faced with a decision about how to handle a conflict with someone else. However, only twenty percent of the respondents in the pre-survey results indicated they *always* prayed when faced with a decision about how to handle a conflict with someone else. In the post survey results the total percentage of respondents who *sometimes, usually or always* rose from seventy four percent to ninety three percent. Of significance is that the percentage of those who indicated they *always* prayed actually declined from twenty percent to thirteen percent. This decrease is most likely attributed to the boys gaining a better understanding of what prayer is and the honesty in which it must be entered. These were principles expounded in the sessions.

13. Statement Thirteen – I pray for answers to the problems I see in my neighborhood and city.

In the pre-survey results, only fifty three percent of the boys indicated that they pray *sometime* for problems in their neighborhood and city. Thirty three percent indicated that they *never* or *rarely* prayed about those conditions. In the post-survey, the percentage of those who prayed *sometimes* rose from fifty three percent in the pre-survey to sixty

seven percent in the post-survey. Those who indicated that they *never* or *rarely* prayed decreased from thirty three percent to twenty percent. While the data suggests an overall shift toward a proclivity for praying, the results still suggests that the boys did not gather a sufficient understanding of the Christian obligation to offer pray for the healing of conditions around them.

14. Statement Fourteen – I compromise (“give in”) in order to avoid violence.

There was a significant shift in the pre-survey and post-survey categories in response to this statement. While only forty six of respondents in the pre-survey indicated that they *usually* or *always* compromise or give in to avoid violence, those combined categories rose to eighty seven percent in the post-survey. This suggests that teachings on Christianity around seeking to solve problems took roots in the boys. The implication for the boys is that if this attitudinal change continues and improve, it could form the basis to try reconciliation among those feuding in the neighborhood.

15. Statement Fifteen – I take responsibility for all my actions.

The responses to this statement are mixed. While one hundred percent of the respondents in the pre-survey indicated that they *sometimes*, *usually* or *always* take responsibility for their actions. The twenty seven percent of the respondents who indicated that they *always* take responsibility for their actions dropped to 0%. There is no explanation for this variation. It could suggest that in the post-survey, there was a more honest response to the statement than in the pre-survey. If that is the case, it means that the boys are gaining the ability to engage in reflective dialogue with themselves about their actions and the responsibility they have for them.

16. Statement Sixteen – It is okay to tell a so-called “white lie.”

The responses to this statement improved dramatically overall. In the pre-survey results, forty percent indicated that they *never* or *rarely* think it is okay to tell a so-called “white lie.” In the post-survey results, the percentage indicating the same rose to seventy four percent. This data suggests that attitudes shifted significantly in this area as a result of the training sessions. It also has positive implications that will help the boys build relationships built on truth and honesty instead.

17. Statement Seventeen – I tell the truth even if it causes me to lose my friends.

The percentage of those responding in the pre-survey results who indicated that they *sometimes*, *usually*, or *always* tell the truth even if it causes a loss of friends was fifty three percent. In the post-survey results, that percentage rose to eighty seven percent. This indicated that Christian moral and ethical teaching caused some shift in attitudinal changes and has the possibility to become a factor in changing the concept of friendship in their environment. In their environment, friendship is often defined as supporting or not squealing on someone even when one may know they did something wrong or even against the law.

18. Statement Eighteen – I believe that telling the truth is the best policy.

In the pre-survey response, thirty three percent of the respondents indicated that they *always* believe that telling the truth is the best policy. In the pre-survey results, when those who indicated that they *always* or *usually* believe that telling the truth is the best policy are considered, the percentage rose to fifty three percent. In the post-survey results, those who *always* believe that telling the truth is the best policy rose from thirty three to forty seven percent. In the post-survey, those who indicated that they *always* or

usually believe that telling the truth is the best policy rose to one hundred percent. This data and the data from statement seventeen suggest attitudinal changes that could be instrumental in breaking the bond of silence that often grips the community. This bond of silence often causes crimes and criminals to thrive in the neighborhood.

19. Statement Nineteen – I would cheat on a test if I studied and just forgot the answers.

In the pre-survey data, sixty percent of the respondents indicated that they would *never* cheat on a test even if they studied and just forgot the answers. In the post-survey results, the percentage of those indicating they would *never* cheat rose to eighty percent. While these are very good percentages in both the pre and post-survey, a large percentage still indicated that they would cheat on a test *sometime* if they studied and just forgot the answers. The percentage in the pre-survey indicating that they would cheat *sometime* was thirty three percent. While it decreased in the post-survey results to twenty percent, it still represent one-fifth of the entire population. If this is used as a representative example of the student population, it would mean that one fifth of the student population *sometime* rely on cheating instead of diligently studying and learning the material. This has long range implication on both school drop-out rates as well as having the kids equipped with the proper skills to compete in this economy. Nevertheless, encouragement should be gained by the increase in attitudinal change as indicated in the post-survey results for those who concluded they *never* cheat.

20. Statement Twenty – It is okay to take food or money that is not yours if you are hungry.

Respondents in the pre-survey and post-survey responded in high numbers that they would *never* take food or money that is not theirs, even if they were hungry. In the pre-survey there were eighty percent who indicated that they would *never* take food or

money that was not theirs. In the post-survey, that number rose to one hundred percent.

The numbers in the pre and post-survey results for this statement are higher, in a positive sense, than the responses provided to statement nineteen, which has to do with stealing.

The implication could be that in some areas, the concept of right and wrong may be more clearly defined, causing higher rates of positive response

21. Statement Twenty-one – It is okay to slip into the movies without paying as long as I do not get caught.

In the pre-survey results, the number of respondents indicating that they would *never* slip into a movie without paying was at a high of sixty seven percent. Those in the pre-survey who indicated that they would *rarely* or *never* slip into a movie without paying were at ninety four percent. This indicates that there was a high attitudinal disposition to avoid those things that were clearly wrong. In the post-survey results, the number of respondents indicating that they would *never* slip into a movie without paying rose to one hundred percent of all respondents. It is most likely that the training sessions helped to affirm this principle in a positive manner for all respondents. This has training implications in the sense that it will be important to help clearly identify areas of right and wrong for similarly situated boys,

22. Statement Twenty-two – I obey and respect my parents.

In both the pre-survey and post-survey results, respondents indicated that they obeyed and respected their parents in large percentages. The number of respondents indicating that they *always* obey and respect their parents rose from a pre-survey percentage of sixty seven percent to a post- survey percentage of eighty percent. When the category of *usually* obey is added, the percentages rise to ninety three percent for the pre-survey results and one hundred percent for the post-survey results. The data in both

categories appear to be disconnected with the reality of what is known. It is quite possible that the respondents in both instances are indicating that they obey and respect their parents while in their presence, whereas parental obedience in school and other places are not adhered to as strictly. The implication here is that Christian moral and ethical training must be taught as an individual responsibility as well so that boys similarly situated can independently act correctly in spite of surrounding pressure to do otherwise.

23. Statement Twenty-three – My parent (s) know what is happening in my life.

In a critical area such as parental involvement and knowledge of what children are doing, only forty percent of the respondents in both the pre-survey and post-survey results indicated that their parent(s) knew what is happening in their life. The reason for this is unknown. However, based on conversations with parent (s), many of them single mothers, it can be surmised that many of them are busy working trying to provide financially for the family. This means that the concept of community must be extended beyond the home so that these and similarly situated boys can have several responsible adults who know what is happening in their lives.

24. Statement Twenty-four – I obey the rules at my school.

There was a significant shift in the pre-survey and post-survey results in response to this statement. While only twenty seven percent in the pre-survey results indicated that they *always* obey the rules at school, that category increased to forty seven percent in the post-survey results. This has implications for creating a better learning environment for these boys and others similarly situated.

25. Statement Twenty-five – I respect those in authority at school.

The statistics in response to this statement changed in some categories. In the key category, however, it remained the same. In both the pre-survey and post-survey results, only thirty three percent of the respondents indicated that they *always* respect those in authority at school. The most important statistic in this category may be that the thirteen percent who indicated that they *rarely* respected authority in school, dropped to zero percent. This means that more emphasis must be given to respecting those in authority when teaching Christian moral and ethical values.

26. Statement Twenty-six – I respect those in authority in law enforcement.

The percentage of respondents indicating that they *usually* or *always* respect authority in law enforcement rose from fifty three percent in the pre-survey to one hundred percent in the post survey results. This significant jump can be attributed to the law enforcement officials who briefed the boys regarding their community efforts. This has implications for the future. If similar collaboration occurred, it could have the possibility of reducing the tension that sometime exist between neighborhood boys and the police.

27. Statement Twenty-seven – I listen to my teachers.

In the pre-survey results, sixty percent of respondents indicated that they listen to their teachers only *sometimes*. In the post-survey results, that percentage dropped slightly to fifty three percent. In the pre-survey results, forty percent of the respondents indicated that they *usually* or *always* listen to their teachers. In the post-survey there was an increase of six percent for these two combined categories. This data illustrated that these boys may still have problems maintaining discipline in school. These statistics are borne

out by the discussions with parents. The lack of discipline could also mean lack of essential learning. While the training sessions appear to have caused some improvement in these overall statistics, it did not cause a significant change. It is possible that these kinds of attitudinal changes could take longer to improve.

28. Statement Twenty-eight – I treat young ladies with respect.

There was a marked increase in the number of respondents indicating that they *always* treat young ladies with respect. In the pre-survey fifty three percent of respondents indicated that they *always* treated young ladies with respect. In the post-survey results, respondents indicated by one hundred percent that they always treated young ladies with respect. This indicated the possibility for young African American boys in urban areas to form more holistic relationships with young girls that are based in mutual self respect.

29. Statement Twenty-nine – I use profanity when talking to young ladies.

Similar to the response in statement twenty-eight, there was a significant increase in the percentage of respondents indicating that they *never* use profanity when talking to young ladies. In the pre-survey results, respondents indicated by only twenty seven percent that they *never* use profanity when talking to young ladies. Conversely, in the post-survey results the percentage of the respondents indicating they *never* use profanity when talking to young ladies rose from twenty seven percent in the pre-survey to eighty seven percent in the post-survey results.

30. Statement Thirty – I offer assistance to elderly people with doors, groceries, crossing the street, etc.

In response to this statement, the views about *always* helping elderly people rose dramatically between the pre-survey and post-survey results. In the pre-survey results,

only forty percent of the respondents indicated that they *always* provided some help to elderly people with doors, groceries, crossing the street, etc. In the post-survey results, this percentage rose to eighty percent, indicating a significant attitudinal change. These attitudinal changes have positive implications for the elderly in the community who are sometimes at risk from predatory activities carried out by boys in this age group.

Conclusion

Based on the attitudinal changes between the pre-survey and post-survey results in several key categories, the ministry project was a success. A longer term program may have produced even greater results. The opportunity for the mentors to observe the boys behavior in civic and recreational outings provided information that helped confirm that attitudinal changes occurred. These fifteen African American teenage boys will continue in a mentoring programs sponsored by GMCHC and the same partners in this ministry project will remain. This writer will continue to be directly engaged in the mentoring program after the end of the ministry project as well.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the Research Project

This project provided the researcher valuable look at how important it is to provide Christian mentoring to teenage boys, particularly those minorities in urban areas. Many of the boys who were in the ministry project came from homes headed by a single mom, with no positive male role model in their life. This researcher also learned valuable lessons about establishing collaborative efforts with the academy and with local law enforcement and judicial representatives.

The Boys

As it relates to the boys, the pre-survey data they completed did not come out, in some instances, as we surmised. While most of the boys indicated they never or only sometimes identified themselves as Christians and they did not attend such Christian based programs as Sunday school, they answered most of the survey correctly from a moral and ethical perspective. Although, records indicate they had either been in trouble or had records to the contrary. For example one of the teenage boys indicated he was considered a “peacemaker,” although school records and discussions with his parents indicate this to be the contrary and he has been in trouble at school a number of times for picking fights. Thus, the marginal differences between the pre and post survey responses

were not significantly different and making it difficult to rely solely on the data to draw conclusions. The reasons for this are many, including the fact these kids, given their backgrounds and age groups, were probably already skilled in *gaming* most systems. Therefore, the data was supplemented with observations of behavior in such places bowling alleys, movies, and trips. For example, many of these kids came from different parts of the neighborhood that would have caused natural confrontation. Yet, there was not one incident of fighting or troublemaking during the entire length of the ministry project. In fact, these boys now visit each other and sometimes spend the night with each other. This would not and did not happen prior to this ministry project. Yet, it was somewhat disappointing that there was not as much of a swing in the data as originally expected.

When this ministry project was initial launched, the method of teaching moral and ethical principles was similar to a classroom or Sunday school session. Quickly, it was learned that this method alone was not going to be successfully. Supplementing the classroom style teaching with trips and outings where the boys observed adult African American males behaving properly quickly gained traction in the model and was used throughout the length of the project. It will also be employed as this project continues.

The other concern in this ministry project with the boys was their initial efforts to *size up* the ministry project and the reason it was being implemented. This is not unusual. Many of these boys have seen people come in and out of their lives and communities, staying only long enough to get what they wanted and then leaving. So understandably, there was a period where they questioned why the ministry project was being established.

Finally, the issue of stability and maintaining a core of boys for the project was of chief concern. In the first few weeks, the number of participants peaked as high as twenty and dropped as low as twelve. We eventually ended up with a stable group of fifteen before officially beginning the project. It was with this core group of fifteen constituted the basis of the ministry project.

Once many of these issues were dealt with, the ministry project could begin in earnest. However, it was clear to this researcher that these primary issues along with a few others not mentioned, had to be dealt with sufficiently in order to establish the kind of relationship which would allow for the kind of Christian based mentoring program which would provide the boys with the moral and ethical background which they would need to make changes in their lifestyle decisions.

The Collaboration

The collaboration initially included Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church (GMCHC), the Alfred A. Owens, Jr. Family Life Center and certain faculty members from Howard University School of Divinity (HUSD). The partnership with the Alfred A. Owens, Jr. Family Life Center grew out of the existing relationship it has with the community and with GMCHC. The Family Life Center sprung from GMCHC as a separate non-profit entity and has existing ties to the community. For example, it is used as a community hub by the City of Washington, D.C., the Urban League, NAACP, Walt Whitman Clinic and other local, city and national entities, to educate the community of various initiatives and to conduct various health screening. The Family Life Center also

has a community health van which goes into the community and provides health screening, HIV/AIDS and TB screening, and dental checks. The Family Life Center also is open for membership to the community and provides a chapel and religious studies library, roof top basketball courts, a bowling alley, physical fitness center, dancing and aerobics, a barbershop, a chapel and a computer lab. So it this was a natural and relatively easy collaboration to build. In this ministry project, the Family Life Center provided the meeting space for the project. To further link this effort to these boys in the community, free six month memberships were provided to all fifteen participants in the ministry project.

The partnership with certain faculty at HUSD grew out of a longstanding educational relationship with GMCHC. Both the Senior Pastor and Co-Pastor received their Master of Divinity (MDiv) and Master of Religious Studies (MARS), respectively from HUSD. The Senior Pastor also received his Doctor of Ministry from HUSD and now teaches there. Additionally, many of the Elders, Evangelists and Ministers received there Master of Divinity degree from HUSD. The participating faculty provided mentoring resources and desired to study the outcome of such collaboration for academic purposes.

The collaboration with representatives from the local law enforcement and judicial system was not originally part of the ministry project. It came about as a result of the relationship which one of the mentors in the program had with key leaders in Washington, D.C. This individual served as an Area Neighborhood Council (ANC) representative for Ward Five, which includes the Brentwood neighborhood from which these boys were chosen. He was able to link the project with representatives from the

police department who came to brief the boys on neighborhood initiatives and to discuss law enforcement issues. A judge from the judicial system came to brief the boys on the operations of the judicial system, highlighting key areas of concern for them. Both these briefings were added on to the briefing on Christian moral and ethical values and made for a robust discussion with active participation from the boys.

Suggested Changes

The boys did not initially respond as well to the project, prompting a need to extend the program. In developing this kind of mentoring program for teenage boys in urban areas, it is suggested additional time, perhaps two to three meetings, be built in for sufficient orientation and normalization of the boys prior to beginning the ministry project, and especially before beginning the pre survey. Stabilizing a core group of boys for the project was a problem. The numbers in this ministry project fluctuated drastically in the first two to three weeks before it stabilized at fifteen. Therefore, it is recommended that time be built into the project to accommodate these fluctuation. It is also recommended that stronger ties be developed with the parents, mostly mothers, in the neighborhoods as well. They eventually provided great assistance in keeping the boys in the program. Care will have to be given to design a teaching curriculum which provides the necessary moral and ethical teachings, but also provides a means of the boys observing adult men positively exercising those moral and ethical principles. Therefore, it is recommended that the project include a variety of low or no cost outings which will allow the boys the opportunity to observe examples. This project utilized bowling, museum visits, short trips and other means to provide this experience and these were used as teachable moments to reaffirm what was taught in the classroom setting.

In terms of collaboration, there are several recommendations are made. First, it is recommended in developing or expanding a ministry project of this type, a survey of internal resources be conducted. It is quite possible people you know already have the resources you need for the project, or they may have access to other resources which will help one launch the project. It is also recommended to outline clearly the roles and responsibilities for all entities in the collaboration and establish a governance role so representatives from all participating entities can check the status of the project and make on-going recommendations for improving the project while it is operational rather than doing a post audit of the success and/or needs for improvement. Finally, there should be clearer roles spelled out for the Academy, if they are engaged in the project. If the role of the Academy is solely for mentoring and tutoring, it should be clearly outlined. Conversely, if the sole purpose is for academic study, it should be clear as well. After the project started, it was discovered clear delineation of the roles had not been communicated sufficiently to everyone.

Conclusion

The African proverb “it takes a village to raise a child,” is appropriate as it relates to this ministry project. The boys in this project from the Brentwood neighborhood of Washington, D.C. had no infrastructure to provide on-going support to them. Moreover, teachings in moral and ethical principles were not a part of their childhood experience. Collaborating with a wide variety of entities (e.g. a church, community family life center, divinity school and local law enforcement and judicial representatives) provided a

support structure to help them make critical lifestyle decisions. It is believed that this type of ministry project, when supplemented with the recommended changes, can be successfully implemented in other communities.

APPENDIX A
CHRISTIAN MENTORING PROGRAM SURVEY INVENTORY

APPENDIX A**CHRISTIAN MENTORING PROGRAM SURVEY INVENTORY**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

AGE _____

DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN _____ IF SO, HOW MANY AND
THEIR NAMES _____

NUMBER OF PARENTS IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD _____

NAME OF PARENTS _____

DO YOUR PARENTS ATTEND CHURCH? ____, IF SO, WHERE _____

DO YOU HAVE BROTHERS AND SISTERS ____, IF SO, HOW MANY OF
EACH AND WHAT ARE THEIR NAMES

WHAT GRADE ARE YOU IN AND WHAT SCHOOL DO YOU ATTEND?

CHRISTIAN MENTORING PROGRAM INVENTORY

DO YOU ATTEND SUNDAY SCHOOL? _____

HAVE YOU BEEN BAPTIZED _____

DO YOU CURRENTLY ATTEND A CHURCH? _____ IF SO,
WHERE? _____

WHAT CITIES OR STATES HAVE YOU VISITED OUTSIDE OF
WASHINGTON,
D.C.? _____

Legend:

- 1 – Never: does not ever occur
- 2 – Rarely: does not ordinarily occur
- 3 – Sometimes: does occur on various occasion
- 4 – Usually: does occur most of the time
- 5 – Always: does occur every time

PLEASE USE THE ABOVE LEGEND TO ENTER THE NUMBERED FREQUENCY THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

1. _____ I IDENTIFY MYSELF AS A CHRISTIAN
2. _____ I BELIEVE IN GOD AND HEAVEN
3. _____ I ATTEND SUNDAY SCHOOL
4. _____ I PARTICIPATE IN CHRISTIAN SPONSORED ACTIVITIES
5. _____ I CONSIDER HOW I WANT TO BE TREATED WHEN DECIDING HOW TO TREAT OTHERS
6. _____ I AM BOTHERED WHEN I DO SOMETHING WRONG TO SOMEONE
7. _____ I SOLVE CONFLICTS WITH OTHER BOYS AND GIRLS BEFORE THEY GET TO BE BIG PROBLEMS
8. _____ I FORGIVE PEOPLE WHO HAVE DONE SOMETHING WRONG TO ME
9. _____ I ASK PEOPLE TO FORGIVE ME WHEN I HAVE DONE THEM WRONG
10. _____ I AM CONSIDERED A "PEACEMAKER" WHO TRIES TO REPAIR RELATIONSHIPS THAT HAVE BEEN BROKEN

11. ____ I VALUE ALL HUMAN LIFE AS GOD'S CREATION
12. ____ I PRAY WHEN I AM FACED WITH A DECISION ABOUT HOW TO HANDLE A CONFLICT WITH SOMEONE ELSE
13. ____ I PRAY FOR ANSWERS TO THE PROBLEMS I SEE IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD AND CITY
14. ____ I COMPROMISE ("GIVE IN") IN ORDER TO AVOID VIOLENCE
15. ____ I TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL MY ACTIONS
16. ____ IT IS OKAY TO TELL A "WHITE LIE"
17. ____ I TELL THE TRUTH EVEN IF IT CAUSE ME TO LOSE MY FRIENDS
18. ____ I THINK TELLING THE TRUTH IS THE BEST POLICY
19. ____ I WOULD CHEAT ON A TEST IF I STUDENT AND JUST FORGOT THE ANSWERS
20. ____ IT IS OKAY TO TAKE FOOD OR MONEY THAT IS NOT YOURS IF YOU ARE HUNGRY
21. ____ IT IS OKAY TO SLIP IN THE MOVIES WITHOUT PAYING AS LONG AS I DO NOT GET CAUGHT
22. ____ I OBEY AND RESPECT MY PARENTS
23. ____ MY PARENTS KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING IN MY LIFE
24. ____ I OBEY THE RULES AT MY SCHOOL
25. ____ I RESPECT THOSE IN AUTHORITY AT MY SCHOOL
26. ____ I RESPECT THOSE IN AUTHORITY IN LAW ENFORCEMENT
27. ____ I LISTEN TO MY TEACHERS
28. ____ I TREAT YOUNG LADIES WITH RESPECT

29. _____ I USE PROFANITY WHEN TALKING TO YOUNG LADIES
30. _____ I OFFER ASSISTANCE TO ELDERLY PEOPLE AS NEEDED WITH
DOORS, GROCERIES, CROSSING THE STREET, ETC.

APPENDIX B

STATISTICAL DATA CHARTS

APPENDIX B

STATISTICAL DATA CHARTS

Statement 1 – I identify myself as a Christian.

Legend	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Never	4 (27%)	4 (27%)
Rarely	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	4 (27%)	2 (13%)
Usually	3 (20%)	5 (33%)
Always	4 (26%)	4 (27%)

Statement 2 – I believe in God and heaven.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Usually	5 (33%)	2 (13%)
Always	10 (67%)	13 (87%)

Statement 3 – I attend Sunday school.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	10 (67%)	8 (53%)
Rarely	3 (20%)	5 (33%)
Sometimes	0 (0%)	1 (7%)
Usually	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
Always	1 (7%)	1 (7%)

Statement 4 – I participate in Christian sponsored activities.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	4 (27%)	2 (13%)
Rarely	5 (33%)	7 (47%)
Sometimes	3 (20%)	2(13%)
Usually	2 (13%)	3 (20%)
Always	1 (7%)	1 (7%)

Statement 5 – I consider how I want to be treated when deciding how to treat others.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	1 (7%)	1 (7%)
Rarely	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	5 (33%)	1 (7%)
Usually	2 (13%)	6 (40%)
Always	7 (47%)	7 (47%)

Statement 6 – I am bothered when I do something wrong to someone.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	6 (40%)	7 (47%)
Usually	3 (20%)	2 (13%)
Always	3 (20%)	6 (40%)

Statement 7 – I solve conflict with other boys and girls before they get to be big problems.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	7 (47%)	7 (47%)
Usually	4 (27%)	3 (20%)
Always	4 (27%)	5 (33%)

Statement 8 – I forgive people who have done something wrong to me.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	5 (33%)	8 (53%)
Usually	4 (27%)	5 (33%)
Always	2 (13%)	2 (13%)

Statement 9 – I ask people to forgive me when I have done them wrong

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	4 (27%)	3 (20%)
Rarely	2 (13%)	3 (20%)
Sometimes	4 (27%)	2 (13%)
Usually	3 (20%)	5 (33%)
Always	2 (13%)	2 (13%)

Statement 10 – I am considered a peacemaker who tries to repair relationships that have been broken.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	2 (13%)	3 (20%)
Sometimes	9 (60%)	6 (40%)
Usually	2 (13%)	2 (13%)
Always	1 (7%)	4 (27%)

Statement 11 – I value all human life as God's creation.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
Usually	6 (40%)	8 (53%)
Always	7 (47%)	7 (47%)

Statement 12 – I pray when I am faced with a decision about how to handle a Conflict with someone else.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	1 (7%)	1 (7%)
Rarely	3 (20%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	4 (27%)	8 (53%)
Usually	4 (27%)	4 (27%)
Always	3 (20%)	2 (13%)

Statement 13 – I pray for answers to the problems I see in my neighborhood and city.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	3 (20%)	1 (7%)
Rarely	2 (13%)	2 (13%)
Sometimes	8 (53%)	10 (67%)
Usually	1 (7%)	2 (13%)
Always	1 (7%)	0 (0%)

Statement 14 – I compromise (“give in”) in order to avoid violence.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	2 (13%)	2 (13%)
Rarely	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	5 (33%)	0 (0%)
Usually	5 (33%)	10 (67%)
Always	2 (13%)	3 (20%)

Statement 15 – I take responsibility for all my actions.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	5 (33%)	4 (27%)
Usually	5 (33%)	11 (73%)
Always	4 (27%)	0 (0%)

Statement 16 – It is okay to tell so called “white lie”.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	3 (20%)	7 (47%)
Rarely	3 (20%)	4 (27%)
Sometimes	6 (40%)	4 (27%)
Usually	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
Always	2 (13%)	0 (0%)

Statement 17 – I tell the truth even if it causes me to lose my friends.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	3 (20%)	2 (13%)
Rarely	4 (27%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	1 (7%)	5 (33%)
Usually	5 (33%)	4 (27%)
Always	2 (13%)	4 (27%)

Statement 18 – I believe that telling the truth is the best policy.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	4 (27%)	0 (0%)
Usually	3 (20%)	8 (53%)
Always	5 (33%)	7 (47%)

Statement 19 – I would cheat on a test if I studied and just forgot the answers.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	9 (60%)	12 (80%)
Rarely	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	5 (33%)	3 (20%)
Usually	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Always	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Statement 20 – It is okay to take food or money that is not yours if you are hungry.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	12 (80%)	15 (100%)
Rarely	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Usually	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
Always	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Statement 21 – It is okay to slip into movies without paying as long as I do not get caught.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	10 (67%)	15 (100%)
Rarely	4 (27%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
Usually	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Always	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Statement 22 – I obey and respect my parents.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
Usually	4 (27%)	3 (20%)
Always	10 (67%)	12 (80%)

Statement 23 – My parent(s) know what is happening in my life.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	1 (7%)	1 (7%)
Rarely	2 (13%)	2 (13%)
Sometimes	4 (27%)	0 (0%)
Usually	2 (13%)	6 (40%)
Always	6 (40%)	6 (40%)

Statement 24 – I obey the rules at my school.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	3 (20%)	2 (13%)
Sometimes	5 (33%)	6 (40%)
Usually	3 (20%)	0 (0%)
Always	4 (27%)	7 (47%)

Statement 25 – I respect those in authority at school.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	3 (20%)	5 (33.3%)
Usually	5 (33%)	5 (33.3%)
Always	5 (33%)	5 (34%)

Statement 26 – I respect those in authority in law enforcement.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	5 (33%)	0 (0%)
Usually	2 (13%)	8 (53%)
Always	6 (40%)	7 (47%)

Statement 27 – I listen to my teachers.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post Survey
Never	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	9 (60%)	8 (53%)
Usually	3 (20%)	5 (33%)
Always	3 (20%)	2 (13%)

Statement 28 – I treat young ladies with respect.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
Usually	5 (33%)	0 (0%)
Always	8 (53%)	15 (100%)

Statement 29 – I use profanity when talking to young ladies.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	4 (27%)	13 (87%)
Rarely	6 (40%)	2 (13%)
Sometimes	5 (33%)	0 (0%)
Usually	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Always	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Statement 30 – I offer assistance to elderly people as needed with doors, groceries, crossing the street, etc.

Legend	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey
Never	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Rarely	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Sometimes	5 (33%)	0 (0%)
Usually	4 (27%)	3 (20%)
Always	6 (40%)	12 (80%)

APPENDIX C

SCRIPTURES INVOLVING CHRISTIAN MORALS AND ETHICS

APPENDIX C

SCRIPTURES INVOLVING CHRISTIAN MORALS AND ETHICS

Session I - Exodus 20:1-17 (KJV)

¹And God spake all these words, saying,

²I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

³Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

⁴Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

⁵Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

⁶And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

⁷Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

⁸Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

⁹Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

¹⁰But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

¹²Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

¹³Thou shalt not kill.

¹⁴Thou shalt not commit adultery.

¹⁵Thou shalt not steal.

¹⁶Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

¹⁷Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Session II - Psalm 1 (KJV)

¹Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

²But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

³And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

⁴The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

⁵Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

⁶For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Session III - Matthew 5:2-16 (KJV)

²And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

³Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

⁵Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

⁷Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

¹⁰Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

¹²Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

¹³Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

¹⁴Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

¹⁵Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Session IV - Luke 11:2-4 (KJV)

²And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

³Give us day by day our daily bread.

⁴And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

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